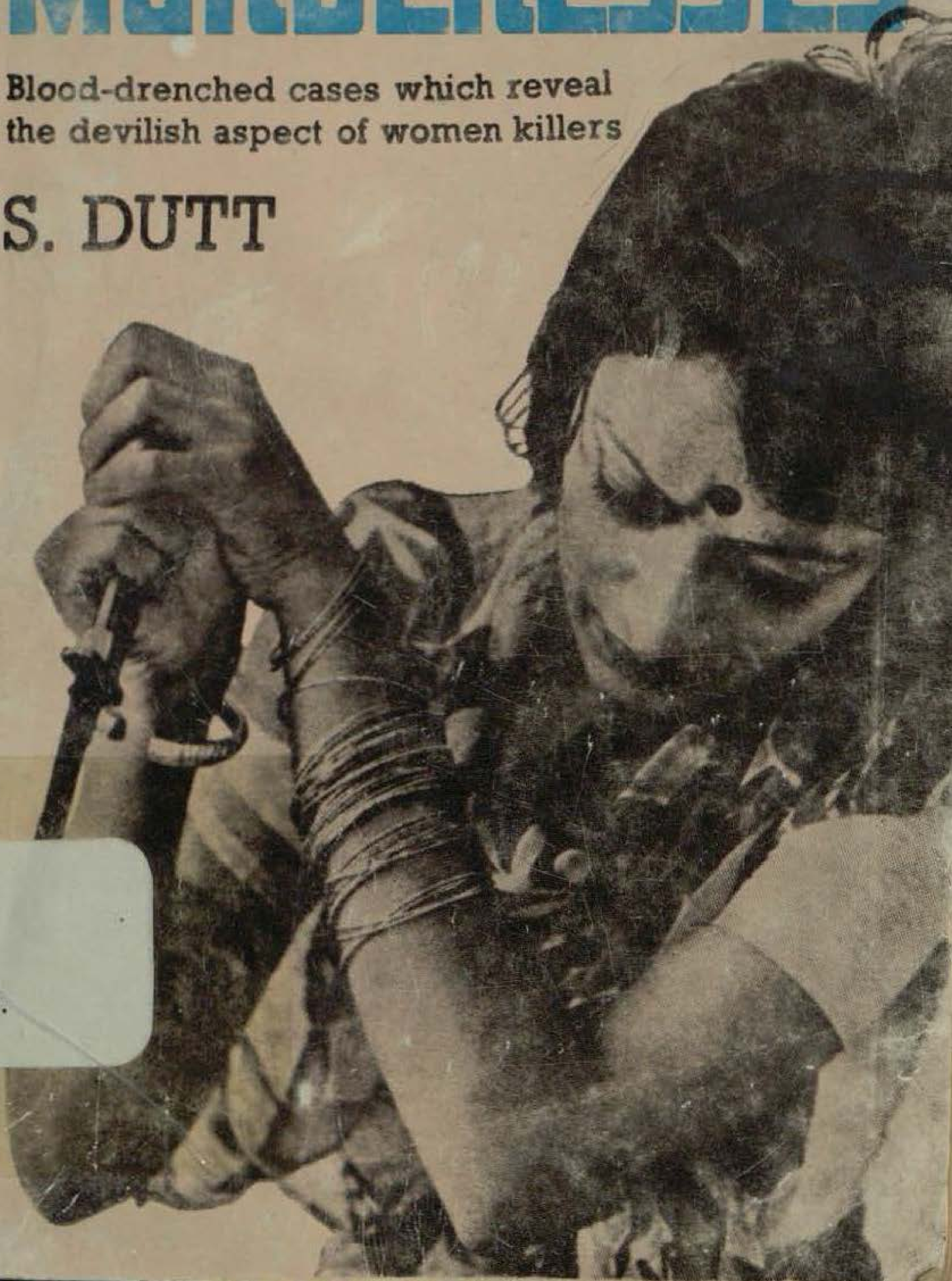
FAMOUS INDIAN MURDERESSES

Blood-drenched cases which reveal the devilish aspect of women killers

S. DUTT



Famous Indian Murderesses

Dr S. DUTT

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"Murderess Maharani Hunts Maharaja. . . ."
"Jealous Concubine Commits Triple Murder. . . ."
"Unhappy Wife Kills Husband. . . ."

All this is lurid and gruesome, no doubt, belying the image of snowhite Indian womanhood. The very idea of a woman committing murder is altogether repugnant to Indian thought and tradition.

Though in fact only 0.27 to 0.33 per cent of murders in India are by women, such exploits receive spectacular public attention. Here, from the files of a criminologist with over forty years experience, are ten sensational cases of women killers which will shock and amaze you!

Dr S. DUTT is also the author of *Master Forgers at Work in India* and *True Stories of Strange Murders in India*.

Murdering Husbands Using Nut-Kaps,
Woman Poisoning Contracts Triple
Murder
Teenager Wife Kills Her Husband

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Dr. Dhar is also the author of Murder Patterns in India and Other Stories of Strange Murders in India

Contents

Preface

MURDER IS a grim business, and it looks even more gruesome when committed by a woman. Under the Indian Penal Code the punishment for such a crime is death. Despite this severe deterrent, the fact remains that murders are committed in this country in ever-increasing numbers every year. However from the statistics of crime it is found that only about 0.27 to 0.33 per cent of the murders committed in this country are by women. The murderess in India, therefore, is still a rare specimen of humanity. Her exploits in this connection therefore often become very spectacular and receive considerable public attention.

Unfortunately, many of the murders committed in this country are not detected in time, and of those actually detected, the offenders sometime get away scot-free owing to lacunae in the legal system. With female offenders this may happen more often than men.

For countless ages, murders have been committed by men only. The idea of a woman doing the same has been altogether repugnant to Indian thought and traditions, holding women in high esteem as they do. The advent of Western civilization, with the concept of equality of sexes in every sphere of activity, the Indian woman has entered this grim business, although in very small numbers. Despite her rarity, the murderess in India is now an established phenomenon.

From his experience as a criminologist in this country for over four decades, the author presents ten extraordinary and

amazing cases (all true but with fictitious names) to the reading public, and leaves them to draw their own conclusions on the subject.

S. DUTT

Murderess Maharani Hunts the Maharaja

BELIEVE IT or not, this is the true story of a beautiful Indian Maharani who became a violent murderess and performed her grim job in a tragic sequence of love and hate, reproach and revenge. She was a highly educated and enlightened young woman of exceptionally great beauty and charm, and lived in an atmosphere of luxury and splendour. She had every thing that a woman desires—health, wealth, beauty, admiration, reputation, and above all, a rich, educated and cultured, Indian Maharaja, who loved her dearly and almost doted on her, as her husband. But whom did the Maharani murder in cold blood in a fit of rage and reprisal in an extremely subtle and sophisticated manner? Her own dear and devoted husband, who, from all available accounts, was extremely attached to her and did everything in his power to fulfil her slightest wish. Why did she kill him then and what was the motive behind this inconceivable and dastardly act, particularly for a woman? Nobody could tell. There is an old saying in Sanskrit that "when even the gods cannot understand the nature or character of a woman, how can a mere man aspire to do so?"

Murder by women in India is an extremely rare phenomenon. In fact, even in the lurid detective fiction in this country, this is practically unknown. In the experience of over four decades of the present author as a criminologist, the murderess in India is a young woman in the age group of 25-35, a childless spinster, wife, or widow, often good looking and sometimes of surprising

beauty. Generally speaking, she is of a nervous, highly excitable temperament, and gets into a fit of rage at the slightest provocation. In a few cases, however, she has been found to be of a cool and calculating disposition, and always in a sullen and pensive mood. She reminds us of what Shakespeare said about the character of Cassius in *Julius Caesar*: "Your Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous." What Shakespeare said about dangerous men, is perhaps equally applicable to dangerous women. In the experience of the present author, the expression on the face of an Indian murderess is generally always one of desire, dissatisfaction, and despair.

What was the motive behind the murder of the Maharaja, and what led his dear Maharani to commit the gruesome outrage? In the opinion of the present author, this is the inevitable concomitant of the formation of an eternal triangle in which two women and a man find themselves, chasing one another in a passionate and sordid game of love and hate. One or more of the participants of the game will ultimately be eliminated and the triangle will eventually collapse.

What led the Maharani to kill her husband, and what did the Maharaja do to deserve such a fate? The facts of the case as revealed in court proceedings show that the Maharaja evinced extraordinary interest in a young artist's model, when, one day, by a sheer chance, he came to visit the studio of his palace artist Mazumdar. There he found him painting the portrait of a surprisingly beautiful model before him. The model was no other than the artist's wife, Molina, a dusky young carvacious woman of astounding beauty, clad in a wet white sari, through which the lustre of her walnut skin and the luscious contours of her rapturous frame were revealed. The Maharaja became so enamoured of this amazing sight, that he began to visit the studio daily while the slow process of painting was going on, devouring the spectacle with his eyes. The Maharaja began

to talk about the extraordinary beauty of Molina to his friends and associates and he even said that she was far more beautiful than even his wife, the Maharani, who had been declared beauty queen in several contests in the country in the past.

All this loose talk reached the ears of the Maharani who became infuriated. She reproached, reprimanded, and even warned the Maharaja that if he did not leave that *churel* alone and stopped his daily visits to the studio, grave consequences would result. But nothing would make the Maharaja mend his ways or listen to his pretty and beloved wife. However, there was nothing on record to show that there was anything improper relation between the Maharaja and the artist's model at any time. He seemed to be quite satisfied by viewing her ravishing beauty and her intense sex appeal. The Maharani thought otherwise, and native faminine jealousy within her gave rise to suspicion and distrust. It stirred the depths of her soul and moved her overwhelming emotions with such explosive violence that she decided to kill the Maharaja outright. This is how it was ultimately done.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Matiala, when he ascended the *gaddi* after his father Maharaja Amarjit Singh about the middle of the present century, was a Maharaja only in name, as the former princely states had all been merged into the Indian Union. The Maharaja was endowed with a privy purse by the benign Indian Government, but was divested of all powers and responsibilities. However, like his father, who was a great patron of art, Ranjit Singh inherited this heriditary characteristic. However, unlike his father, who was a great connoisseur of sculpture—and had accumulated a vast collection of marble, terracota, porcelain, and bronze figurines and statues of beautiful women (often nude)—Ranjit Singh was a great lover of oil paintings of such masters as Raphael, Murilo, Gaguin, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Watson, Millias and others. His special favourites amongst such masterpieces were nudes and bathing

beauties. During the years in which he made his sizable collection of such treasures, he had also acquired an inordinate taste for paintings of bathing belles of Indian origin, rendered by native talents. Since an absolutely nude female form is taboo in Indian painting, he used to collect paintings of Indian beauties in wet clothes. The half-hidden, half-revealed female forms exhibited thus used to give him extraordinary though somewhat perverted satisfaction.

At about this time, there was a Bengali artist of distinction, Debendra Mazumdar, who had become famous in the oil and water-colour for murals, wall, and ceiling decorations, and in the portrayal of chic and delicate forms of Bengali female beauty. Mazumdar could bring out such extraordinarily fine and delicate beauties by his inimitably deft touches that he became famous throughout India as an artist and painter of distinction, and his handiwork, shown in exhibitions and fairs, was in great demand, fetching high prices. Several of them found their place amongst the collections of Ranjit Singh.

But artists in India as elsewhere are an indigent lot, and have often to lead a hand-to-mouth existence. They work by inspiration and for obvious reasons cannot work fast enough to make their vocation a commercial success. Mazumdar was no exception to this rule and often he found the life of an artist dreary. He could scarcely meet the necessities of life with the proceeds of the sale of his paintings. Daily, conditions were becoming worse and he was in such desperate plight that he was thinking of giving up his profession when one fine morning he received the grand offer from the Maharaja of Matiala for the post of palace artist at a salary of one thousand rupees, all found. This promised to remove all his financial difficulties. His assignment would be the decoration of the new palace of the Maharaja with murals and paintings of his own choice. The job was a permanant one, and in view of the great opulence of the Maharaja and his prestige among native potentates, this offer was consi-

dered a rare stroke of luck indeed.

Mazumdar (40) was a typical Bengali artist. He was a tall, lean, and lanky fellow of wheaten complexion with a clean-shaven face, long, unkempt hair and a languid expression in his dreamy eyes. He seemed to be day-dreaming most of the time and he was a poor talker. But he seemed to perform wonders with brushes and colours from his pallette. He seemed to create miracles with his fingers and instilled life into his work.

Mazumdar's wife Molina (27) was a direct antithesis of her husband. She was a petite, curvacious, statuesque figure of the colour of walnut, and so amazingly fine was her physignomy that she could be taken to be the animated statue of a Hindu goddess from the temples of Konarak or Khajuraho, or one just descended from the cave paintings of Ajanta or Ellora. With long, glossy black hair coiffured in the Ajanta style, large languorous dark eyes, pert nose and an oval face with cherubic fullness, she had an expression which was captivating at first sight. The gorgeous curves of her torso and the delicate taper of her arms and legs would indeed make her a perfect model of human dignity and charm, and it was no wonder that Mazumdar was always making her a model for his canvases which were acclaiming him as one of the greatest painter-artists of his day.

After Mazumdar had taken up his assignment with the Maharaja, the latter one day visited his studio, and was agreeably surprised to find Molina standing before him in wet clothes, while Mazumdar was busy painting her on the canvas. At the sight of the Maharaja, Molina was startled and attempted to go away, but the Maharaja told her not to stir a limb as otherwise her husband's paintings would be spoilt. At this she remained still and Mazumdar went on working on the canvas, livelier than before, while the Maharaja looked on in utter amazement at the figure before him draped rather carelessly in a wet white sari, through the transparency of which the lustre of her

walnut skin and the luscious contours of her rapturous frame revealed themselves. The Maharaja remained there for over an hour gazing at the extraordinary spectacle before him, almost devouring the woman with his eyes. He came to the studio again after a few days and thereafter went there daily and remained for hours.

The Maharaja's wife, Maharani Palvinder Kaur, was a woman of extraordinary beauty and was quite wellknown for this reason throughout north India. She was a tall, slim, ivory-complexioned, chestnut-haired beauty queen of many contests, and the Maharaja was considered by many to be extremely lucky in having a wife and consort of such extraordinary charm. By European standards (vital statistics: 36, 23, 37), Palvinder was the ideal beauty. Apart from her physical charms, Palvinder was quite skilled and talented otherwise. She could drive a car, ride a horse with extraordinary ease, was an expert marks-woman with the gun and rifle, and had bagged big game in the forests of Madhya Pradesh and Nepal Tarai. But her favourite sport was shooting black buck and chinkara in the extensive rural plains and submountain regions of Matiala. She was also an expert swimmer.

At the time of our episode, Ranjit Singh was about 45 and Palvinder Kaur about 30 years of age. Doubtless there was some disparity between their ages, but Ranjit Singh, who was a great connoisseur of art and beauty in the female form, should have found Palvinder an ideal wife and companion. But it was not so. Palvinder's aggressive beauty was of course stanning at first sight, but it was like the dazzling and scintillating glitter of a diamond of the first water. Compared to her, Molina's soul-stirring and soothing beauty was like the gleam of an earthernware lamp casting its cooling radiance all round and showing all objects in their proper perspective. Ranjit was fed up with Palvinder and getting more and more attracted towards Molina. His visits to the studio of Mazumdar became more prolonged and

he loaded Molina with expensive presents, apparently with the secret consent or connivance of Mazumdar. Palvinder remonstrated with Ranjit times without number for his inordinate attraction towards Molina. He had altogether become indifferent to Palvinder's exquisite charms, regarded everywhere as the very epitome of female beauty. The estrangement between Ranjit and Palvinder was getting worse and the gulf between them growing wider. Nothing, it seemed, could bridge the gulf.

Early one morning in March, when the mist was still thick over the ground, Ranjit and Palvinder went out on shikar in the submountain region of their own estate. They went out in a jeep, along with a few servants or gun-bearers, and after reaching the foothills, took to different paths on foot, each accompanied by a retinue. They however met again at the jeep and took lunch together. Thereafter, they again separated, Ranjit in pursuit of the fleet-footed black buck in the cultivated fields, and Palvinder going after the elusive chinkara in the scrub bush of the submountain region. In the evening, when Palvinder came back to the jeep, she had already bagged two chinkaras which were carried to the car by villagers and loaded on the luggage carrier. But Ranjit was nowhere to be seen. However, when the fullmoon was just over the horizon, his bearer came running to tell Palvinder that the Maharaja had fallen into a well while drawing water, and he could not find anyone nearabout to lift him out of the well. At this Palvinder became extremely worried and went to a nearby village from where she collected a number of people and stout ropes for lifting Ranjit Singh out. They all came and with prodigious effort lifted the floating body out. Ranjit Singh was dead. This was indeed surprising as he was an expert swimmer, and the well had only about three feet of water while Ranjit Singh was over six feet tall. His rifle—a 300 bore underlever's "Savage" lying by the side of the well with its full complement of six cartridges in the magazine, safety-catch in position. On superficial

examination of the body it was found that there was a hole in the back from where blood was oozing out. This was most extraordinary as nobody was reported to be within miles of the well. Apparently Ranjit Singh must have been hit at the back by a projectile while he was in the act of drawing water from the well. The cause of his death being thus shrouded in mystery, the police were informed and the body was handed over to them for post-mortem examination.

At the post-mortem examination it was found that the Maharaja was killed by an arrow, the head of which had penetrated his left lung from the back between the third and the fourth rib and had almost completely severed the left pulmonary artery. Death was due to shock and extensive haemorrhage of the vital organs of the body. But the arrow-shaft was not there and was nowhere to be found. The arrow-head being of a peculiar nature, it came to me for further examination from the police. They had surmised that the arrow might have been shot by a member of the hostile aboriginal tribe living in Matiala.

But the so-called arrow-head sent to me by the police was found on careful examination to be not an arrow-head at all, but a hollow, elongated and pointed projectile made out of a copper tube drawn out to a point at the forward end with neatly cut spiral grooves on its body. Its diametre was 0.28 inch and the length about an inch and-a-half with a wall-thickness of 3/32 inch. The spiral grooves were three in number, anticlockwise in direction and about 1/16th of an inch in depth. The pointed tip of the projectile was solid to about 1/3 of an inch, but the rest was hollow. The weight of the projectile was about 280 grains. It was black in colour and looked like steel, but it was really hardened (arsenicated) copper. The police had mistaken it for a steel arrow-head by its colour and shape only. But they were utterly mistaken, for an arrow-head striking an object without the arrow-shaft is utterly unthinkable and is also theoretically impossible.

Further examination revealed that the so-called arrow-head was a bullet shot from a 0.280 bore Ross accelerated express rifle. This rifle was introduced for the first time by Sir Ronald Ross in 1926 with a straight bolt and a telescopic sight for long-range big game shooting. The muzzle velocity attained was 4,500 feet per second and the muzzle energy about 2,800 feet-pounds. On account of the extremely high, in fact fantastic, muzzle velocity (at that time the Le Enfield army service rifle had a muzzle velocity of 2,300 feet-second), no lead bullet could be used as it would melt by the friction heat generated through the air. Copper was found to be more satisfactory, but it being



Figure 1. 0.280 bore Ross accelerated express rifle fitted with 10-power telescopic sight. Special ladies' model with cheek-plate and recoil heelpad

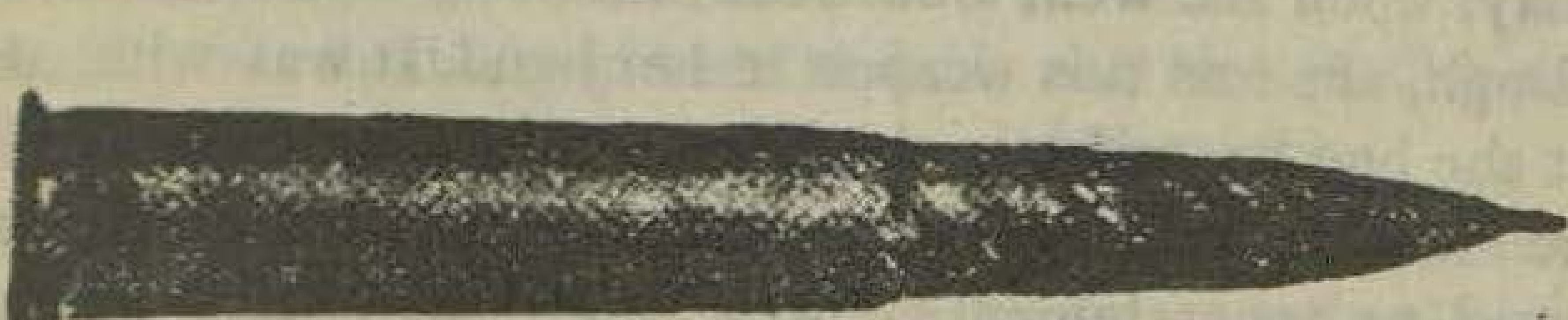


Figure 2. A live cartridge of the above rifle with hollow copper-tube spiralled bullet



Figure 3. Diagram of the copper-tube spiralled bullet showing the spirals (enlarged view)

much lighter than lead, a much longer bullet had to be used. In order to keep it on a straight path, the bullet had to be made hollow and the surface grooved in a spiralled manner. A live cartridge of the 280 bore Ross rifle is shown in Figure 2, complete with its copper-tube spiralled bullet, and Figure 3 shows a diagram of the bullet only. Theoretical calculations show that with a charge of 43 grains of cordite and a 28-inch barrel, the bullet would have a muzzle velocity of 4,526 feet per second and would spin round its own axis at the incredible speed of about 36,000 revolutions per minute. At a 300-yard target, the deflection from the straight path would be less than 1/3 inch.

On the receipt of my report, the police made extensive inquiries and investigations, and surprisingly enough, a Ross 280 bore sporting rifle fitted with a ten-power telescopic sight together with 86 cartridges exactlv as described above were recovered from the palace armoury. On further inquiry it was discovered that this rifle was the favourite weapon of Maharani Palvinder Kaur whenever she went out hunting, and on that fateful day, when she went out buck shooting with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, she had this weapon in her hand. It was with this rifle that she had bagged two chinkaras on that day. The police therefore arrested Maharani Palvinder Kaur on suspicion, and after recording her statement before a magistrate, bailed her out.

In her statement before the magistrate, Palvinder Kaur said that on that fateful day she and her husband went out shooting, but took entirely different directions as she wanted to shoot only chinkaras while the Maharaja was keen on shooting black bucks only. Upto lunchtime both of them were unsuccessful in bagging any game, and they had lunch together. In the afternoon she saw a heard of chinkaras in the foothills and shot at them many times with her Ross rifle at comparatively long range (300-350 yards), but could bag only two of them. While returning to the starting point in the evening, she discovered as a terrible shock, the tragedy that had overtaken her husband.

Further cross-questioning produced from her the statement that it was absurd and preposterous to think that she had killed her husband. But it was just possible that one of her shots had glanced and gone astray and might have hit him at the back at the moment he was drawing water from the well. She felt extremely mortified at what had happened.

At this stage the police again came to me to find out whether the Ross rifle bullet could have been a glanced or deflected bullet from another direction. I examined the bullet again. It was almost in perfect condition, without the slightest trace of any dent or deformation. Considering the fact that the bullet has a muzzle velocity of 4,500 feet per second and a muzzle energy of 2,800 foot-pounds, calculation showed that even at 300 yards it would have a residual velocity of over 4,000 feet per second and a residual energy of about 2,000 foot-pounds. A deflection of even five degrees from the original would cause a loss of momentum of nearly 275 foot-pounds, and this amount of incident energy would deform the hollow copper bullet almost out of recognition. From the nature of the bullet recovered from the body after post-mortem, it became perfectly clear to me that the bullet was fired straight at the body and that it did not hit the latter as the result of any glance or deflection.

Palvinder Kaur was thereafter challaned by the police and charged with the murder of her husband by shooting him with a 280 bore high power Ross sporting rifle fitted with a ten-power telescopic sight, firing copper-tube spiralled hollow bullets while on a shikar outing with her husband for shooting black bucks and chinkaras. The motive for the crime was attributed to the great estrangement between the pair as a result of the Maharaja's inordinate fascination for the artist's model, Molina The Maharaja was said to have become almost mad about her and would not give up doting on her despite continuous remonstrances and reproaches from his wife. Native feminine jealousy was thus aroused and it became intensified by his constant neglect and

disdain of the Maharani. Murder came in the wake of all such unfortunate events and happenings.

In the Sessions Court it was found that the charge against Palvinder Kaur under Section 302 (murder) could not be substantiated for want of direct evidence. She was, however, convicted under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and sentenced to seven-years rigorous imprisonment. On appeal to the High Court, however, she was acquitted on the ground of benefit of the doubt. Thus ended a most extraordinary episode of our times.

Sophisticated Murderess Wields Deadly Missile

WHAT IS sex appeal? What are men attracted towards women? Why are all the troubles in this strange world of ours caused by this unique phenomenon? This seems to be a simple enough question for the primitive human being. This is a natural urge for the preservation of the species. But when we pose this question in the background of human civilization, with all its restrictions and impositions, and the concomitant suppression and sublimation of the natural human instinct, it becomes far more difficult to solve it with a simple answer.

All men are not attracted towards all women, or putting it in singular, any man is not drawn towards all women. There is a process of selection guided by the nature of the civilization he lives in, it coupled with his personal erudition, fads, and indiosyncracies. According to ancient Sanskrit authors an attractive woman may have different characteristics according to different men. For example, Kalidasa in his epic *Vikram Urvasi* has described the great attractiveness of Urvasi—the lotus-faced heavenly courtesan as due to her "lotus face beaming with her slightly open mouth giving a glimpse of her pearly teeth, her crimson lips glowing like the 'Bimba' fruit and her large eyes sparkling with vivacity and animation." All these depictions relate to the face of the woman only. Bhavabhuti, however, thinks that the figure is more important in this respect. An attractive woman, according to him, should have "large and swollen breasts, thin and narrow waist with a sunken and almost

invisible navel and capacious hips and buttocks." Bhartrihari also is of the same opinion, and in his epic poems has vividly described the attractiveness of young milkmaids churning milk as the result of this activity. This second order of attractiveness of a woman is therefore confined to the torso. It is interesting to note in this connection that the vast majority of ancient Hindu sculptors in their classical rendering of female beauty in granite, as can be copiously seen in the temples of Konarak, Khajuraho, Chidambaram and others also subscribed to this cult of torso beauty. There is also a third type of attractiveness to be found in ancient Sanskrit literature which is ascribed to the beauty of her long and tapered legs, comparable to the trunk of an elephant. Such a beauty has been termed "Gajasura," that is, with legs like the trunk of an elephant—with thick and heavy thighs, smooth and unprominent knees, tapering shins culminating in thin and tiny delicate feet.

In ancient India, women used to wear scant clothes and most of their torso and legs were open to public gaze. But under the exigencies of modern civilization, these two aspects of beauty and attractiveness are covered with clothes and shoes, and so are not exposed to view. Hence the attractiveness of a modern woman is confined mainly to the first order, that is, the beauty of the face according to diverse standards. However, in more recent times, cultured and educated women of India have been showing much of their second order of beauty by wearing brief low-necked blouses showing the greater part of their upper torso. They have also been keeping a bare midriff which exposes a large part of the middle torso from the edge of the breasts to the level of the navel or even slightly lower. These ingenious devices, together with mechanical aids to the anatomy of the chest and hips, like brassiere and the corset, have tended to revive the concept of the second order of attractiveness, which had in fact become extinct during the last five centuries of alien rule in India. Quite a large number of cultured and educated

men are now attracted by this second order of beauty in a woman as the following true story will tell.

Shri Shyam Behari Agarwal, hailing from a Vaish-Agarwal (Bania) family of Lucknow, was a brilliant student of the Lucknow University, standing first in the M.Sc. examination in Chemistry. He thereafter sat for the IAS examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission and came out fourth on the list of successful candidates. He joined the IAS, and after a period of training in Delhi and Mussorie, was posted as a joint magistrate in Delhi.

Shyam Behari's neighbour in Lucknow, Alfred Kaul, and his wife Pamela Kaul were schoolteachers in Lucknow, having migrated to this city from Lyalpur in the Punjab after partition. Although they were Christians and under no compulsion to leave their home in the Punjab, they still felt unsafe in the hands of Pakistani brigands bent on loot arson, rape, and murder during the tumultuous partition days. They came to Lucknow and were soon absorbed as teachers in high schools in that big city. Their only caughter, the teenaged Sheila, who had already passed the intermediate examination of a Panjab University, had also no difficulty in getting admission into the first year B.Sc. Honours class of the Lucknow University.

Sheila was a brilliant student and stood first in the B.Sc. Honours and M.Sc. examinations in Zoology. In the M.Sc. examination she had specialized in soil microbiology and had submitted a thesis on the subject which was highly appreciated by her examiners. After her M.Sc. examination, Sheila was offered a job in her mother's school as a teacher, but being a very ambitious girl, and in view of the emergence of India as a socialistic republic with great scope now for women, Sheila decided to sit for the IAS examination. She came out successful in this examination, but was 34th on the list of successful candidates. She could not therefore get into the IAS or the Foreign Service, but was taken up in the revenue department of

the Government of India. After a period of training she was posted as income tax officer, private salary circle I, Delhi, with her office in a new building in New Delhi.

Shyam Behari was a dark, tall, lanky young man of 24 when he was posted to Delhi. Although he was an intelligent young man, still the expression on his face indicated a somnolent and lethargic disposition. He had regular features, but by no stretch of the imagination could he be taken to be handsome. However, on account of the glamour of his service, he was considered a very eligible bachelor, particularly in his Bania community where such academic qualification as that of Shyam Behari was an extreme rarity. There were many offers and proposals for his marriage which he consistently declined. Shyam Behari had taken up his apartment in Metcalf House where he lived alone, attended by a bearer-cum-cook Har Bhajan, from Lucknow. To facilitate his going about in a big city he bought a Lambretta scooter with the help of a loan from the government.

Sheila Kaul was a tall, fair and very handsome girl, who was, however, so lean and skinny while at college in Lucknow that she could hardly attract any attention from her fellow boy students, particularly of her neighbour and colleague Shyam Behari, whose concept of beauty and attractiveness of a woman belonged to the second order already described. Being her neighbour and studying in the same class at university he was quite attentive towards her whenever they met. His orthodox family however could have no social relation with an *Isaai* (Christian) family like that of Sheila, and therefore any meeting between Shyam and Sheila could only take place outside their family circle, which was seldom.

Shyam Behari had no knowledge that his previous classfellow and neighbour in Lucknow, Sheila, was also in Delhi, and posted as income tax officer. He had not seen her for over two years. He was, therefore, pleasantly surprised when one day he casually met her at a party in the Soviet embassy. And what a

change had taken place in Sheila during the two years! Instead of the lean and thin, pale and plain college girl at Lucknow, she was now a full-grown buxom woman with sharp and heavy contours, particularly on her bust and hips. Her eyes, which were pale and listless before, had now assumed a twinkle that was stunning for a young man, and her fine, pearly teeth, winking through her crimson lips, lighted up like moonshine amidst her melodious giggles. The old pallor on her face had been replaced by a pinkish glow on her cheeks. Her bust, which was flat and boyish during her college days and which had earned her the appellation "Man-chester," had now assumed a twin-peaked prominence with a deep valley running in between. Her bottom had expanded beyond recognition. Her torso, two-thirds of which was bare and open to public gaze, bare midriff and deft draping of the low-slung sari, was indeed like the body of an Indian musical instrument like the *Sarangi* equivalent to the European violin. Equally wonderful was the fact that Sheila, who had only scraggy, shoulder-length hair before, had now an enormous bun on her head, poised at a cute angle with curly strands over her forehead and face. Shyam Behari was taken aback by the sudden development of such beauty in Sheila, and stared at her in amazement and admiration. The sharp eyes of Sheila did not fail to discern this. She invited him to come to tea in her apartment in Defence Colony on the following Sunday afternoon. This Shyam Behari readily accepted.

On the appointed day Shyam Behari was quite prompt in arriving at Sheila's apartment. It was a chic, self-contained flat consisting of one large room serving as drawing-cum-dining room in front with a partitioned-off portion serving as a bedroom. The bedroom portion had a niche at the end fitted with a large bay window. The partition was made by a large curtain fitted with runners gliding smoothly on a brass tube fixed across the width of the room. The curtain was of finely printed cretone with modern motifs. At the end of a passage running the

length of the large room, there was a small modern kitchen fitted with a scullery and a few shelves and cupboards. There was also a pantry which served as a servant's quarter, for the only maidservant whom Sheila had brought from Lucknow and who did the entire work of the house, including cooking. The attached bathroom was also quite modern, with glazed-tile walls and floor, bathtub, geyser, wash-basin and English type commode.

The furniture in Sheila's apartment was also quite modern, consisting of a three-piece drawing room suit with dunlopillow seats, an oval dining table and four dining chairs with sunmica top and backs, a modern low bedstead with inclined legs and a dunlopillow mattress, a bedside table, a dressing table, with a large round mirror, and cupboards and shelves, and a padded, round dressing stool.

Shyam Behari was treated quite sumptuously by Sheila, and they had a long and pleasant talk reminisceing about their college days at Lucknow. Sheila invited Shyam Behari to come any time he was free. Shyam promised to come the next Sunday but said that this time it was his turn to treat her. He would like to take her out for dinner and then to a cinema show in the evening. He inquired whether he should bring a taxi for her or would she not mind riding pillion on his scooter. Sheila said that she would love to ride pillion and no taxi was needed.

When Shyam Behari arrived the following Sunday to take Sheila out, he found her quite ready. Instead of the flowing and falling sari, she had put on a salwar and a tight kamiz clinging to her lithe and lissom frame and a black nylon net dupatta tightly covering her large bun of hair. She sat astride on the pillion and clung to Shyam Behari by clasping him from behind with her two arms so that she could remain steady and not fall off. Apparently she was not used to such rides, but she liked the thrill of the novel experience. In the course of the hectic

pillon ride on the scooter, the pinnacles of Sheila's prominent bust prodded the back of Shyam Behari and he was having in ecstasies the like of which he had never known before.

After a joyous ride over vast stretches of fine roads in New Delhi, Shyam Behari and Sheila went to the evening cinema show at the Odeon, and when the show was over at about 8 P.M. they went to a posh restaurant in the Connaught Place and had dinner. After this Shyam Behari took Sheila back to her residence and bidding her a warm goodbye, returned to his own abode at about 10 P.M. He was so exhilarated that he could hardly sleep till late in the night.

After this memorable episode, Shyam Behari went to Sheila's place on every holiday and Sunday evenings, repeating the ecstatic experience. On one of these blissful occasions, with Sheila riding pillion and holding him in a tight embrace from behind, Shyam Behari furtively said to Sheila: "Sheila, my dear, would you like to marry me?" Sheila said: "Of course, my pet, when would you like it to happen?"

"I shall let you know as soon as possible."

But this was easier said than done. At the end of this little escapade, when Shyam Behari began to think about it more seriously, he felt that there would be an insurmountable difficulty in the way of their matrimonial union. He came from a very orthodox and uncultured Bania family who would consider any marriage outside their own community taboo. The idea of their only *laek* (competent) son from a family of five sons and four daughters marrying a Christian woman would be considered sacrilegious by his parents. However, Shyam Behari with his runaway thoughts veering around Sheila and his frenzied mind hankering after the cherished idea of holding her in his arms in a tight frontal embrace after the lawful nuptial union, decided to write to his father about his proposed marriage.

His father was ablaze with rage and promptly wrote back

that he would never consent to this blasphemous marriage. But in spite of this, if Shyam Behari contracted this marriage, he would not have the slightest hesitation in disinheriting him, and to all intents and purposes consider him dead. Before concluding his terrific outburst, Shyam Behari's father gave him a word of advice as a worldly-wise man: "My son, give up running after an '*Isaai randi*'' (Christian prostitute) who would completely ruin your life and our entire well-knit family, if you marry her. I have a very fine proposal for your marriage. There is a beautiful and highly educated daughter of a friend of mine in Delhi, Miss Agarwal, Lecturer in English in the women's college close to your Metcalf House. My friend has offered her in marriage to you, my son, and I think this would be an ideal match. I shall be glad if you see this girl yourself soon and let me know your views in the matter. I shall then finalize the proposal."

Shyam Behari was undoubtedly upset by the blast from his father with a consolation prize, but this did not deter him from his resolve of marrying Sheila. In consultation with her, it was settled that they would get married in the coming X-mas vacation. But she insisted that he must embrace Christianity before the marriage. Sheila's parents being Roman Catholics, they wanted the marriage to be celebrated in St. Mary's Church in Delhi on X-mas day. Shyam Behari was so infatuated with Sheila that he agreed even to this distasteful proposal. He however decided to have a civil marriage also with Sheila, and for this he would be giving one month's notice to the registrar of civil marriages under the relevant Act of the government.

One Sunday afternoon at 3 P.M. Shyam made an unscheduled visit to Sheila's apartment on an important mission in connection with the marriage. The maidservant opened the door for him, but said that the *memsahib* had just gone for a bath and she generally took about an hour. She inquired from Shyam whether he would care to wait that long or would call later. Shyam

Behari had nothing else to do, and so he decided to wait and told the maid accordingly. He sat on the drawing room sofa and began to look leisurely round the room. The partition curtain had been taken down for a wash and was lying in a heap in a corner. A clear view of the bedroom was now available, including the entire contents. When his eyes fell upon the bed there was the surprise of his life in store for him. On the bed was Sheila's pink brassiere. And curiously enough, it had two large conical pads of flesh-coloured sponge-rubber fitted in, simulating the sumptuous breasts of a buxom woman. A further glance towards the dressing table showed a large bun of false hair or wig, which apparently Sheila must have been wearing in public, giving the false impression of a glorious head of hair. So this was how Sheila had changed beyond recognition during the previous two years. Shyam Behari's agonized mind was a wreck in an ocean of anxious thoughts, and blazing question marks were dotting his entire mental horizon. He was in a reverie when Sheila suddenly emerged from the bathroom on the completion of her hour-long toilet. She had apparently no idea of the presence of Shyam in the room. Shyam exclaimed within himself at the sight of her: "My God! Who is this woman? She could not be the Sheila I know of." She was clad in a chemise only. Her face was long and haggard and her hair was short and scraggy as before. She had not a trace of colour on her face or lips. But what was most disturbing and shocking for Shyam Behari was that her fascinating bosom was gone and her chest was as flat as that of a man. The quick eyes of Sheila noticed Shyam Behari's embarrassment and she said: "Shyam dear, will you please wait outside for a moment and let me dress? The curtain has been taken down for a wash and I have no privacy now in this room." Shyam complied and went out. He quickened his steps, ran down the stairs, jumped on to his scooter and drove home at breaked speed. The only thought crossing his mind in a medley of agonizing confusion was: "My

God! What a witch I was running after!"

After this event, Shyam Behari never went to Defence Colony. The shock he had received was too much for him. However, once the amorous instinct is aroused in a young man, he cannot do without the company of a young woman. He felt that there was a great void in his heart which was longing for something undefined, but apparently feminine. He thought of his father's advice, took up the telephone in his office, dialled a number after consulting the directory, and said: "Hello, is this the Banaprastha College for Women?"

"Yes, Sir. What can I do for you?"

"May I speak to Miss Agarwal, lecturer in English? I am Shyam Behari, her cousin, and presently joint magistrate in Delhi."

"Please hold on. I shall call her."

Soon there was a pleasant female voice: "Yes please, I am Miss Agarwal speaking."

"I am Shyam Behari, the son of Lala Avadh Behari of Lucknow, who is a friend of your father's I believe. My father has written to me that he would like to have a closer relationship with your family. Have you heard anything about it?"

"Yes, I am aware of it."

"May I see you sometime then?"

"Yes, this evening if you please, at about 5 P.M. I shall wait for you at the bus stop outside the college gate."

Shyam Behari went punctually 5 P.M. and found a tall, fair, and very handsome young woman waiting there. There was no other person at the bus stop. He hesitatingly asked her whether she was Miss Agarwal. She replied in a fine musical voice that she was indeed Miss Anita Agarwal, and she was waiting for him, who she believed, was Mr Shyam Behari. Shyam Behari smilingly admitted so, and asked her whether he should get a taxi or would she not mind riding pillion with him on his scooter. She said that she would love to ride pillion. As

she was clad in a sari, she sat side saddle. Shyam Behari was soon off with her on a joyride.

Every single aspect of Anita was a surprise for Shyam Behari. Firstly, her name Anita was too modernistic for the daughter of a Bania whose standard name patterns are "Ram Pyari," "Ganga Devi," "Janki Bai" or even "Kaushalya" or "Sumitra." Then for an Agarwal woman to be so tall, fair, and beautiful was an extremely rare phenomenon. Besides, to be so highly educated and lecturer of a degree college was nothing short of miraculous. And to be so up-to-date as to ride on the pillion of a scooter with an unknown young man! Shyam Behari was overjoyed to strike upon so lucky a find, and he cursed himself for having missed this so long. Anita was a beautiful girl who had all the attributes which Shyam Behari cherished. She had a fine head of long, back, glossy curls which were real, as they floated like dark clouds behind her when the big bun she had tied them in became loose in the wind and fell down her back. Her prominent bust was real as the contours of the twin promontories could be easily seen through the brief blouse without bra, of semi-transparent material. Her narrow waist could be spanned by a stretch of his palm, and her hips were so capacious that they filled the entire pillion seat. Shyam felt that she was the woman of his dream and cherished ideals.

Thereafter, Shyam Behari took Anita out every evening, and before long they were engaged. It was decided after consultation with their parents that they would get married in another month's time, on 12 December, at the residence of Anita's uncle in New Delhi. On 25 November, invitation cards were issued for this auspicious occasion. They were now anxiously waiting for the day.

Late one evening, by the end of November, when Shyam Behari returned home after his usual rendezvous with Anita, his servant told him that a *memsahib* had come to see him in a taxi, but finding him not at home, had left a note which he

handed over to him. It was:

Shyam darling,

You have not seen me for over a month, and I wonder what this might be due to. I could not contact you on the phone in the office, and having misgivings about your health, I came here to see you. Your servant told me that you had gone out on your scooter with a Miss Sahiba from the college nearby, and you would be late in coming. I further understand from him that you are soon going to marry this lady teacher. So you are having a fine time. I have a very important message to give you concerning both of us. So you see me immediately.

Yours ever, Sheila

After this Shyam Behari did not go out for several days. At the end, Anita came to see him at his residence to find out what the matter was. She told him that a lady income tax officer had come to her college on official business, and casually met her and talked to her. She inquired from Anita whether it was true that Shyam Behari was going to marry her and on being answered in the affirmative, she became furious. She said that this man had definitely promised to marry her, but after having been very intimate with her had left her in the lurch and betrayed her. Now he was thinking of ruining the life of another innocent girl! What should be the fate that such people deserve? "Well," she said in a fierce tone, "the wages of sin is death," and she left Anita immediately. Anita furtively inquired from Shyam: "Who is this fashionable young lady?" Shyam Behari did not give any answer.

There was only about a week left for the marriage when Shyam Behari went out alone one day on his scooter in the evening and returned home rather early, at about 8 P.M. He complained of headache and nausea and went to bed without

taking his food. Next morning he went to office as usual, but returned early, as he said he had a slight temperature with severe headache. He went to bed and asked his servant to massage his back where a severe pain had developed. He also complained of difficulty in opening his mouth and swallowing water to quench his mounting thirst.

By about 5 P.M. there were contortions in his neck and face and spasms had set in. By about 7-30 P.M. these had become so severe that the resident medical officer had to be called in. He diagnosed Shyam Behari's illness as a serious case of tetanus and advised his immediate removal to the Government Hospital. This was done at about 9 P.M. by which time Shyam Behari's condition had become extremely serious. Anti-tetanus vaccine was injected, but this had scarcely any effect. Shyam Behari was quite conscious despite his excruciating pain and spasms. He was questioned by the hospital doctor as to how he could contract tetanus, as this never comes without a wound. On this he said that on the previous evening he had gone to a friend's house and had an altercation with her regarding a private matter. In a fit of rage she threw at him a piece of curved iron from her table as he was leaving her place, and this struck the back of his neck. It produced a slight scratch which was so insignificant that he took no notice of it at all. He however did not disclose the name or address of this lady friend of his despite all persuasion.

Upon Shyam Behari's statement, the doctors examined the back of his neck where they found two curved scratches about three inches long and about 1/16 inch deep. The scratches had bled slightly at several places and were now suppurating all over. It was strange that Shyam Behari took no notice of the wound at all. The tetanus bacilli therefore had more than 30 hours to incubate and multiply and by now had become extremely virulent. The case was therefore beyond hope. By 2-30 A.M. Shyam Beh ri was dead. On account of the mystery sur-

rounding the death of Shyam Behari, the police were informed, and they, subjecting the body to a post-mortem examination, confirmed that the death was the result of a severe attack of tetanus contracted through a wound on the back of his neck, the source of which required investigation. They therefore registered a case of a suspicious death of a high government official.

Here it would not be out of place to say a few words about tetanus from authoritative medical literature. Tetanus is caused by an anaerobic bacteria (microphotograph in Figure 1) often

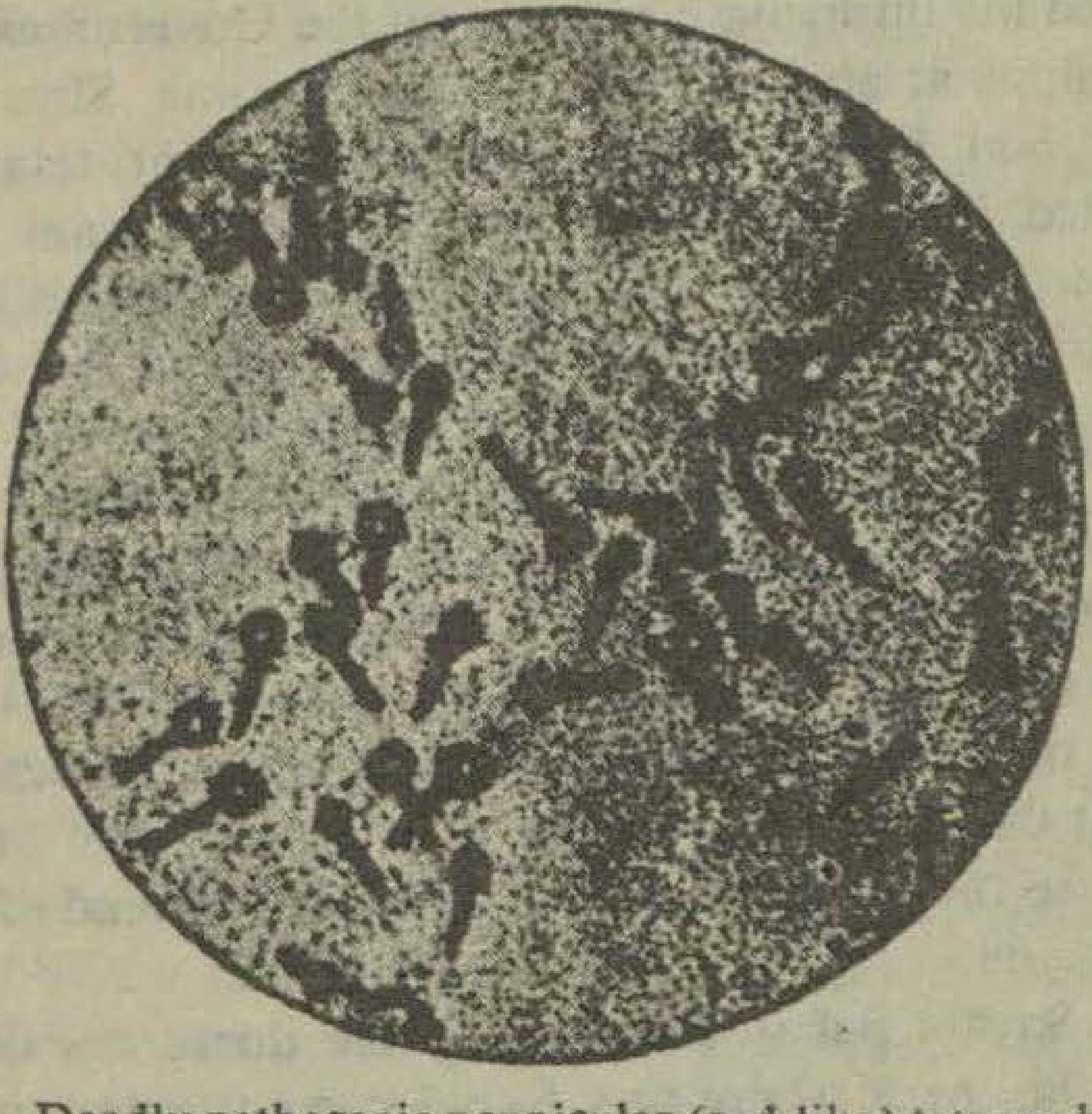


Figure 1. Deadly pathogenic pennicular (rod-like) tetanus bacilli with circular spores attached (enlarged 1,250)

occurring in soil where it forms spores. From the soil the spores enter the intestines of animals like cows, buffaloes, horses, donkeys, mules, etc. along with the grass and fodder they eat. The bacteria thrive in the intestines without causing any harm to the hosts and come out in the dung that they excrete. Thus a

continuous cycle is maintained between the soil and the animals by the bacteria. It has been found that horses' dung contains the largest concentration of the bacteria and its spores.

The main characteristic of the tetanus bacillus is its property of forming a toxin of such potency that one-twentieth-millionth part of a gram is enough to kill a man. The tetanus bacilli enter



Figure 2. A castoff horseshoe picked up from the street and containing Tetanus bacilli in high concentration

the human body through a cut or scratch on the skin, multiply rapidly, and produce their toxin which enters the central nervous system and affects it. The bacilli are very resistant to temperature and most antiseptic chemicals. The incubation period for the bacilli is ordinarily from two to seven days, but cases are known where tetanus had developed within six to eight hours of an injury. The poisoning of the nervous system causes violent

contortions, spasms, lock-jaw, and severe pain all over the body. The patient dies of asphixiation and heart paralysis, but his mind remains clear to the end.

After the death of Shyam Behari the police searched his belongings and recovered two letters written to him by Sheila, with whom he seemed to have amorous relations. One of the letters has already been quoted before. The other letter read:

203/D, Defence Colony,
Flat No. 7,
New Delhi.
December 3, 19

Shyam darling,

Why have you stopped coming to me? Why have you deserted me? I am in a delicate condition with nausea and giddiness in the morning. You know you are responsible for my condition. For God's sake see me immediately on the receipt of this letter. Otherwise I am going to kill myself, and in that case do not think for a moment that you will be alive to attend my funeral. So do come without fail.

Yours ever, Sheila

The police also recovered from the belongings of Shyam Behari a fine studio photograph of a lady with the endorsement: "To dear Shyam from Sheila." With the help of these documents the police had no difficulty in tracing Sheila to her flat in Defence Colony one Sunday morning. When faced with the formidable evidence against her, she admitted that she and Shyam Behari had been in love with each other for a long time, and about three months ago Shyam Behari had promised to marry her during the coming X-mas. He gave her a bejewelled engagement ring for this purpose which she showed to the police. She admit-

ted that after the engagement they had become intimate, as the result of which she had become pregnant. But what was most surprising and shocking was that soon after this, Shyam Behari deserted her completely, and for the last two months had not come to her even once. On the other hand, she had received definite information that he had been carrying on with a lady teacher of a women's college in his neighbourhood and had even announced his intention of marrying her.

Sheila said that she was extremely shocked and mortified to hear about the death of Shyam Behari from the police. The police told her that he had died of tetanus contracted from a wound she had inflicted upon him by throwing at him a piece of curved iron, according to his dying declaration. The police wanted to know what that piece of iron was. On this Sheila produced a worn and discarded horseshoe which she said she had picked up from the street and kept it on her table as a lucky charm (Figure 2). She showed the police a composite photograph of a married couple



Figure 3. Symbolic horseshoe for luck, held over the heads of newly married couple

with a horseshoe hold over them for good luck (Figure 3). The horseshoe was a very lucky omen for all Christians.

On a search of her premises, the police recovered a large number of love-letters written to her by Shyam Behari, in which he had addressed her in very endearing terms, and also said about their engagement and impending marriage during the coming X-mas. The police also recovered a 22 bore, six shot Colt's automatic pistol bought on 1 December on an arms licence obtained on 25 November. Asked why she had bought this weapon, she said that it was for her own protection as she was living alone in her flat.

The police brought the iron horseshoe to me and asked me to find out whether it contained any poisonous matter on it. It had a peculiar smell, reminding me of culture medium (taurocholic acid), and micro-chemical examination actually detected traces of it. But what was most interesting was that tetanus bacteria and their spores were found in high concentration on it, particularly at the worn and sharp ends. However there was no trace of any organic or inorganic poison on the horseshoe.

Sheila was arrested by the police, produced before a magistrate and charged with the murder of Shyam Behari by inflicting on him a wound with a worn horseshoe containing a biological poison. The motive for the murder was stated to be revenge for her betrayal after a promise of marriage. But the charge of murder (Section 302 IPC) could not be substantiated even in the magistrate's court. The police therefore had to change the charge to one of culpable homicide not amounting to murder (Section 304 IPC) and prevailed upon the magistrate to commit her to sessions.

The sessions judge however acquitted Sheila, as in his opinion the police had miserably failed to establish her guilt. After she had been shamelessly and criminally betrayed by Shyam Behari, it was quite natural for her to get into a fit of rage at the sight of him and throw at him an apparently harmless thing as a

worn-out horseshoe which she kept on her table as a lucky charm. She could never know that it carried a virulent biological poison. It was indeed sad that Shyam Behari died of tetanus, but she could never imagine it would happen. She was honourably acquitted.

It was several months after the acquittal that the police came to know that in the M.Sc. examination in Lucknow University, Sheila had specialized in soil microbiology and the study of disease-bearing bacteria derived from the soil. Hence, Sheila must have been well acquainted with tetanus bacteria also derived from the soil. But this finding was too late and the burden of proof too heavy. So nothing could be done to assign the blame to her for this grim tragedy.

Murderess Amazon Defends Her Honour

ACCORDING TO statistics of crime in the capital of India it would appear that crimes of a serious nature have increased by nearly 300 per cent during the past decade. Amongst them murder figures prominently, and during 1968 alone the number of murders had gone up to a stupendous 374, amounting to more than one murder a day. Most murders, however, are of a clumsy nature, and from the point of view of a criminologist they are of little interest. The vast majority of them have been committed by knife cuts, dagger thrusts, or lathi blows resulting in incised vicera or broken skulls or bones. Interesting or subtle types of murder involving the use of firearms or poisons, however, do take place occasionally. In very rare instance, the use of an extraordinary firearm like a country-made pistol, a service revolver, or a muzzle-loading shotgun has come to my notice during the last four decades. I have also come across some extremely rare cases of poisoning by the use of white arsenic, strychnine, hyocyamine, add thebatoxine.

Murders by the most unusual cutting instruments—safety razor blades, pen knives, knitting needles, ornamental paper cutters and the like are the most unthinkable and unbelieveable, but they do happen sometimes. The following true story is cited as an example.

Colonel Sarvapally Ranganathan was an army medical officer of distinction and had retired from the Indian Army Medical Corps (IAMC) about two years after the end of the Second

World War. But unlike most high-ranking retired officials from the south who generally prefer to settle in their native place after retirement, colonel Ranganathan had chosen to settle in Delhi, despite the inhospitable climate of the place, and the tense political atmosphere. One of the reasons that made the colonel make Delhi his choice was that he could open a clinic and practise his profession with tremendous possibility of attaining distinction and opulence. He being only 52, for a medical man of his ability or eminence, Delhi would be a haven where endless opportunities would await him. The incidence of disease is quite high in Delhi, and the per capita income is the highest in India.

Ranganathan took up a decent bungalow in Hauz Khas, a new colony of well-to-do on the outskrits of New Delhi. Although comparatively small, the bungalow was of a very modern type with a miniature lawn and flower garden in front, a side-walk leading to a two-storeyed garage, and a kitchen garden at the back. It had a combined drawing-dining room and two bedrooms with attached bathrooms on the ground floor, and two bedrooms with a balcony and open terrace on the first floor. The upper floor of the garage, with its attached bathroom and kitchen, was intended for the residence of the servants and/or the driver.

Ranganathan was a widower with two grown-up sons both of whom had joined the army, one as captain in the 2nd Hyderabad Ordnance Corps and the other as a squadron leader in the air force. His only daughter was a widow with two minor sons, and she used to spend her days at Bangalore where her late husband had a house, and where her two children were attending school. During the children's long vacation from school she used to come and stay with her father. Occasionally she used to come during the Dussera holidays also, but never during X-mas, as the severe winter of Delhi was too much for her to bear.

The entire lower storey of the house had been converted into a clinic by Ranganathan. The drawing room was a waiting room for the patients, the diningroom was the dispensary, the front bedroom was the diagnosis or examination room where the colonel used to see his patients, and the rear bedroom, though ordinarily used by him as his own bedroom, could be converted into an operation theatre when required. For patients the colonel did not charge any fees for examination, but they had to buy medicines prescribed for them from his dispensary. This practice was found to be far more remunerative than charging a small fee from patients for diagnosis and prescription and allowing them to buy their medicines from the market. It had also a good psychological effect on the patients as they thought that the doctor was charitable enough to administer to their ailments free, and the medicines prescribed would cost the same or more if bought from the market. But the fact remained that most of the medicines kept in the doctor's dispensary had been obtained by him as free samples from reputed manufacturers, and the patients also did not know what actual medicines had been prescribed for them. Had they known this, they could have bought the same medicines from the market at one-fourth the price charged them by the doctor's dispensary. Ranganathan had a roaring practice by adopting this interesting technique, and during mornings and evenings his clinic was crowded with patients, so much so that even his large waiting room could not accommodate all of them, and many had to wait patiently on the verandah, and even on the pavement outside his house.

Ranganathan did not like to go out to see patients at their homes, and so he purposely kept a high fee for such visits so as to dissuade them from calling him. However, so great was his reputation as a physician that well-to-do people used to call him for visits despite the expense, and so he had always an extremely busy time. He however preferred to rest after lunch.

At tea time he drank heavily his favourite drink of brandy and lemonade (shandy), and would reek of liquor during the evenings when he saw his patients. But apparently the heavy drinking that he did in the afternoon never affected his sobriety and power of judgment and diagnosis in the evening, and he examined and administered to his patients with a degree of patience and equanimity that was indeed remarkable. Many of his patients were women and children.

Ranganathan was a dark, tall, hefty man with square thickset jaws and a stolid countenance. His slightly greying, dense, curly hair, bushy eyebrows arching over large gleaming brown (often bloodshot) eyes, large and prominent blobby nose, thick lips, and clean-shaven ebony face made him look exceedingly masculine, though really ugly. With a height of over six feet, he was like a black giant at the sight of whom children used to run in horror. It is a strange paradox of human nature that most ladies used to consider him an attractive, handsome. His fine manners, nice and equable temperaments, and exceedingly polite and pleasant behaviour, particularly towards his numerous patients, would, however, completely belie his fearsome looks and he seemed to be quite a popular figure in the entire neighbourhood.

As has already been stated, colonel Ranganathan was living alone in the house. He had a single servant, Somyajulu, who was both his cook and domestic servant and driver for the black Buick sadan which he had had for a number of years. Somyajulu, whose name was usually abbreviated to only Julu, was the orderly of the colonel in the army, and had retired at the same time as the colonel. He was therefore a very trusted servant and was remarkably efficient. Like his master, he was a jet-black hefty man whose white gleaming teeth dazzled against his ebony skin like glow-worms, and were like landmarks against the dusky contour of his negroid face. It was difficult to find the boundary from where his black hair started and his

small forehead ended. Julu could speak Telugu (his mother tongue); English, Hindi, and Bengali fluently. In utter contrast to his abhorrent countenance, Julu was quite a pleasant fellow, very obedient and respectful towards his master, and would cheerfully do all his multifarious duties in the house without a murmur. In fact Julu was an ideal servant.

Ranganathan's work in the clinic was from 9 A.M. to 12 noon in the morning and 6 P.M. to 9 P.M. in the evening. At 1 P.M. he had his lunch after a bath, and thereafter he used to have a nap for a couple of hours, till about 3 P.M. He then had his drinking bout for about an hour, alone. Between 4 P.M. and 5 p.m. he used to see patients on special appointment for which he used to charge high fees. The fees were purposely kept high so that he had only a few select patients visiting him at this time. On Sundays, however, the colonel took a complete holiday. His clinic remained closed, and he scrupulously avoided seeing any patient on that day. On Sunday, his servant Julu also took a holiday after lunch for going to the cinema. The colonel's compounder, two dispensary assistants, and the lady receptionist also did not come for duty. In fact, on a Sunday afternoon, the colonel was entirely alone in the house.

On Sunday afternoon, in bitterly cold mid-January, Ranganathan's house was the scene of a grim tragedy. When Julu returned home from cinema at about 6-30 P.M. he was surprised to find the house in complete darkness. There was not a sound from anywhere within the house. When he went inside the colonel's bedroom and switched on the light, a ghastly sight met his eyes. Ranganathan, clad only in shirt-sleeves and without trousers, was lying on the floor of the room in a pool of blood with a dagger stuck into his neck. He was dead. Julu became so terribly frightened at the sight that he ran immediately to the police station in the vicinity to lodge a report about the incident. The police came immediately to the house

for investigation, and sent the body for post-mortem examination.

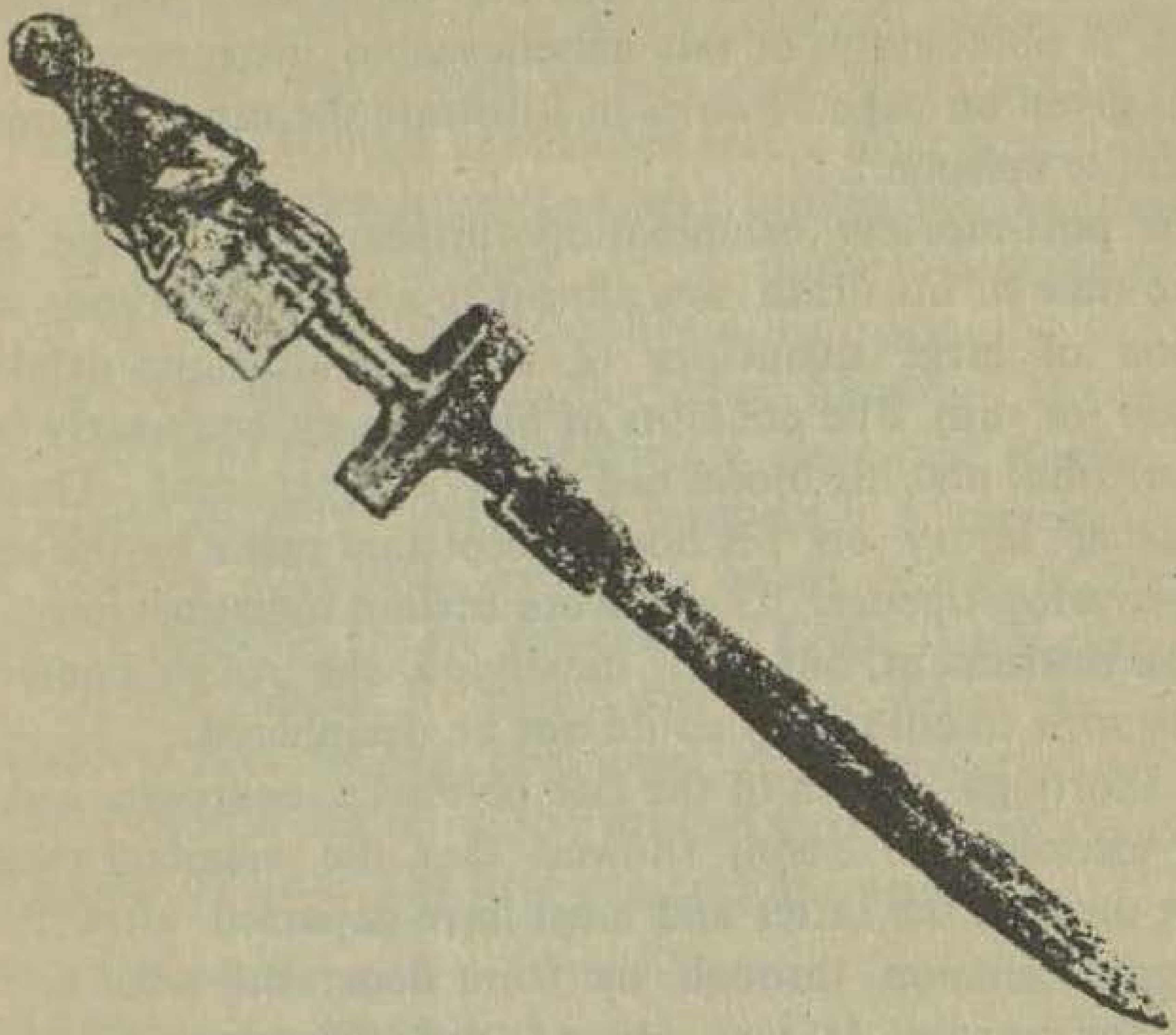


Figure 1. A Crucifix-cum-letter opener-cum-paper cutter

The post-mortem examination revealed that Ranganathan died as the result of the severence of his left jugular vein in the neck which was pierced by the vigorous thrust of a long, pointed instrument, which surprisingly enough, was not a dagger at all but was an ornamental crucifix worn round the neck with a chain as a religious icon by devout Roman Catholic priests and devotees. It had a small figurine at the top in the form of a Scott Highland soldier playing his national musical instrument—the bigpipe. The bottom of the crucifix was elongated in the form of a paper-cutter-cum-envelop-opener with bevelled edges and a pointed end, the top figurine serving as a handle. The complete instrument was made of bronze, silver

plated on the outside. The bevelled and tapered blade was $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches long and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide at its broadest point. The pointed end was quite sharp, but the edges were comparatively blunt. A photograph of this unbelieveable instrument of murder is given on page 37 so as to illustrate the utter absurdity of the entire episode.

The post-mortem examination further revealed the colonel at the time of his death was almost in a state of stupor by ingestion of large quantities of strongly alcoholic drinks like brandy or rum. The contents of his stomach had nearly five per cent alcohol and his blood had nearly 0.5 per cent. There was no other injury on his body except that made by the crucifix-cum-envelop opener. There were certain indistinct finger prints on the instrument, but being mostly on the rough contours of the figurine handle, they could not be deciphered.

A thorough search of the late colonel's bedroom and adjacent examination room showed that the assailant must have come through the latter and must have departed after finishing his grim mission through the front door. But what an instrument for murder! It was absurd and ridiculous to think that an ornamental envelop opener made of bronze should be used for this purpose. Could not the murderer think of a more effective instrument than a blunt envelop opener? The mystery deepened when the colonel's servant identified the envelop opener as belonging to the colonel's himself. He used to keep it on his writing table in his bedroom and used it daily to open his huge postal mail. From this it became clear that the assailant did not come to the colonel with the intention of killing him, but the murder came in the wake of perhaps an argument. Apparently there was a struggle with the assailant as the furniture in the room, including two teapoys, one brass standard lamp, and an electric room heater had been overturned. The bed of the colonel also seemed to be a seat of struggle as the bed clothes and pillows had been badly disturbed. On a search

of the examination room, a large ladies' handbag, a gold Roamer ladies' wrist watch and a piece of pink satin with laced cutwork apparently torn from a lady's petticoat, were recovered. The Roamer watch had a lacy gold strap with a clasp which was broken. It must have fallen on the floor with force, as the pivot of the balance wheel had been broken by the impact. The watch hands had stopped at 12 minutes past 4 o'clock, indicating the time at which the accident took place.

But most revealing of all was the ladies' handbag. It contained a pink coloured lace handkerchief, a deep red Revlon lipstick in golden telescopic mount, a compact in a mirrored golden case made by Elizabeth Arden, a small bottle of French perfume by Rigaud in an ornamental Eiffel Tower case, and about thirty-five rupees in notes and coins. What was most interesting was that the bag contained three prescriptions for one Miss Mantosh Batra on the printed letterhead of the colonel and signed by him. The first prescription was:

For Miss Mantosh Batra
Eletris Cordial ... one bottle
One teaspoonful to be taken four times a day after meals.
Sd/- S. Ranganathan. Dated: 12th December.

The second prescription was:

For Miss Mantosh Batra
Mixture

Tincture Ergot fort	...	25 ml
Hexamine	...	250 mg
Histamine dihydrochloride	...	1.5 mg
Spirit rectified	...	25 ml
Aqua	...	100 ml

To be made up into 10 doses, one to be taken every morning after breakfast.
Sd/- S. Ranganathan. 27.12.

The third prescription was:

For Miss Mantosh Batra

5 ampules:	Ergotinine sulphate	...	0.5 mg
	Procaine hydrochloride	...	1.5 mg
	Aqua	...	5 ml

per ampule. One ampule to be injected in the hip every day
Sd/- S. Ranganathan. 11.1.

From these prescriptions and from the fact that the murder took place on 19 January, the following facts were revealed: Firstly, the name of the owner of the handbag was Miss Mantosh Batra; second, she was suffering from some uterine trouble and was visiting the colonel as a private patient for treatment for some time, almost every fortnight; third, she was a wealthy and fashionable young lady. The piece of laced pink satin could be from the petticoat she might have been wearing at the time she visited the colonel on 19 January; fourth, the gold wrist watch might also belong to her.

Could she be the murderer of the colonel? It seemed absurd to entertain such a grotesque idea. It was unthinkable that a hefty giant like the late colonel could be killed by a fashionable and possible frail woman after a struggle, by no better a weapon than an ornamental bronze envelop opener. Besides, what could be the motive of such a dastardly crime? The every idea was beyond imagination.

The police had not much difficulty in tracing Miss Mantosh Batra, after making inquiries from servant Julu, compounder Jayanti Prasad, and the local drug store—"The United Pharmacy"—which supplied the prescribed medicines to Miss Batra. Miss Mantosh Batra was the physical instructress of the local government girls' Higher Secondary School, and was living in a working girls' hostel run by the government. When shown the ladies' handbag and the Roamer wrist watch, she claimed they belonged to her. She also admitted that the piece of laced satin was torn from her petticoat. But how they could find their way into the colonel's apartments on the evening of 19 January was

what Miss Batra refused to say anything about. She was arrested by the police and produced before a magistrate for recording her statement.

Miss Batra was a glamorous young woman of extraordinary charm. She was tall, fair, with large dark eyes shadowed with long eyelashes and shoulder-length curly, dark chestnut hair rippling about her crescent forehead. She had the bust and chiselled figure of a female athlete which she undoubtedly was. She had the strange combination of the sturdy strength of an Amazon with the delicate daintiness of a mythological Diana. Her dress and deportment, however, made her dazzling beauty lasciviously attractive for men and awaken their baser instinct. She had extraordinary sex appeal.

Before the magistrate Miss Batra made a most extraordinary statement. She said that for some time she had been suffering from menstrual troubles, and was having amennorhoea, dysmennorhoea and menorrhagia by turns, accompanied by fever; nausea, and splitting headache. On the advice of her friends, she visited colonel Ranganathan several times for treatment. She used to go to him in the afternoon on appointment, as a private patient, as she had no time or inclination to go to his free clinic where she had to wait for hours, along with dozens of other patients. The colonel was very nice to her and gave her three prescriptions one after the other, extending for over a month. When she informed the colonel that his medicines had no effect in alleviating her troubles even after one month, he invited her to come to him on that fateful Sunday (19 January) for a thorough investigation of her case and a correct diagnosis and prescription. Accordingly, she went to him at about 3-30 P.M. She found him smelling strongly of liquor and in a somewhat dazed state. He made her lie on the examination table and made an internal examination of her vagina and cervix by probing with his finger along with an instrumental probe. He then touched her vagina with a medicinal liquid and also gave her

an injection on the left hip. Thereafter he said that the treatment would have to be repeated every Sunday, for several weeks. She was then going to get up from the table and had just pulled down her petticoat when the doctor swooped on her, and with one hand he tugged at her petticoat from which he actually tore away a piece, and with the other hand on her chest he tried to keep her down on the table. He had already taken off his trousers and was going to mount the table with the obvious intention of raping her, when in a frenzied state of nervous excitement she gave him a vigorous push which floored him. She immediately alighted from the table and ran towards the door, but the doctor caught her before she could open the door to escape and, bodily lifting her, took her to his bedroom and flung her on the bed. He was immediately upon her, and they struggled in bed and out of it with the result that many things in the room were upset. Finding that she was waging a losing battle with this hefty giant bent on ravishing her, she looked for some weapon with which to keep the brute at bay until some help arrived for which she was shouting at the top of her voice. But no weapon of any kind was in sight anywhere in the room. Driven to desperation she then saw the envelop opener on the doctor's writing table amidst a heap of already opened letters, and gripping it immediately in her right hand, she gave a vigorous thrust with it into the doctor's neck. The instrument pierced the neck right through, blood was gushing out in torrents, and he fell down with a thud, uttering a shrill agonized cry. She thereafter did not look back to find what had happened but immediately rushed out of the house barefoot (her shoes had been left in the house which the police later recovered from the examination room) like a mad woman until she reached her own abode. She did not as a matter of fact know that the doctor had died as the result of the thrust she had made at his neck with the envelop opener on that fateful Sunday.

Miss Batra was committed to sessions on a charge of murder

during colonel Ranganathan, a famous physician of New Delhi, by piercing his neck with a pointed instrument. The trial lasted several days, but in view of the peculiar circumstances of her case in which all evidences fully corroborated her statement, she was acquitted by the sessions judge on the plea of the right of self-defence. She was in fact commended for her pluck and bravery in defending herself and her honour in a grim struggle with a hefty assailant. An appeal by the state to the High Court against the acquittal was dismissed as the court maintained that a lady had every right of defending her honour even if it meant the killing of the assailant on the spot.

Pupil Kills Professor for Unrequited Love

A MOST surprising fact about modern educated girls is that they often become enamoured of their teachers and want to marry them despite the fact that the teachers are already married and have children. This peculiar trend is noticeable in many seats of higher education in the country. Although co-education has been widely regarded as an excellent system for the education and training of young people, still the system is not an unmixed blessing. In the first two years of the degree course, the tempo of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical work, etc. is high and boys and girls do not get much time to talk to one another outside their classes. But when they reach the M.A.course, they get plenty of time and opportunities to talk to one another. In the M.Sc. course, the day-long practical classes after morning lectures are a very good opportunity for boys and girls to engage themselves in gossip, amorous talk and flirtation. This is particularly so as the practical classes are scarcely visited by teachers after the preliminary instructions for experimental procedures have been given to students. When the number of girls in a practical class is large, the opportunity of amorous gossip is less, but with only one or two girls amongst many boys, the classroom becomes like a typical beehive, with queen bees surrounded by buzzing drones. On account of the freedom of action and movement enjoyed by modern girls, and the physiological urges of developing womanhood, the above-mentioned mix-up of boys and girls in the practical classes often leads them to "dating"

and promiscuisity, fragrently culminating in undesirable and occasionally disastrous results.

Modern girls in colleges are mostly impressed by external appearances. They become attracted to handsome boys or young teachers, particularly if they are wealthy and can lavish expensive presents on them. A co-ed girl's preference for young teachers in her amorous venture arises from the fact that while a student's future is still uncertain, the case of the teacher is already established, and she feels more secure in plunging in with the lot of the teacher. Once the amorous instinct is aroused and the girl is sure that she has something on the teacher, she does not care whether he is married or has any children. She feels that she can get anything she wishes, to the extent of having her lover off his family like discarded clothes. She even risks her life or honour in such speculative ventures. In some cases her calculations come out to be correct and she is able to fulfil her cherished desire. But sometime all her calculations misfire and prove to be utterly wrong, from which grave consequences may arise. This is exemplified by the following true story.

Doctor Mohan Lal Gautam, MD, FRCS (Edinburgh), was one of the most famous medical men of north India that adorned the galaxy of brilliant men in the staff of the King George's Medical College, Lucknow, as professor, during the thirties. His subject was pathology in which he was supreme, but in other fields also, like medicine and pharmacology, obstetrics and gynaecology, forensic medicine and toxicology and even in anatomy and surgery his knowledge was profound and he had many published papers to his credit in these diverse subjects, in many distinguished medical journals in India and abroad. Owing to his preoccupations with teaching and research work in his college, and supervision work in the attached medical college hospital, he had very little time to attend to outside patients and had fixed high fees for his visits so as to dissuade the general public from encroaching upon his valuable time.

His reputation as a doctor was however so great that many well-to-do people used to call him to attend to them. One remarkable aspect of Dr Gautam's greatness was that he used to attend to his students and their families, and also genuinely poor people without any fee at all. And for them he often paid for medicines and other necessities out of his own pocket.

Dr Gautam lived with his family in a fine bungalow attached to the college in Badshahbagh. The bungalow had extensive grounds with well laid gardens and neatly trimmed hedges of *mehndi* (lawsonia), duranta, doedonia, inga, lantana, and other flowering hedges. Dr Gautam, being a connoisseur of flowers, paid particular attention to his flower garden where, apart from a vast collection of Indian and foreign rose plants, he had also a large number of flowering shrubs like hamiltonia, bignonia, alamanda, ixora, bauhinia, patria and others, giving forth their varigated and exquisite flowers throughout the year. His flower garden in winter was a riot of colours of every shade with seasonal flowers growing to perfection under his loving care, and the constant attention of half-a-dozen malis and coolies. To water this vast assembly of flowering plants, he had a tubewell in his compound, with a network of concrete channels. Water was also taken to various other parts of the garden by articulated tin pipes and rubber hoses. Dr Gautam spent a fortune on his garden which was undoubtedly one of the finest in Lucknow.

Dr Gautam was 38, had a small family consisting of his wife, Neelima, about thirty; his daughter, Ira about ten; and son Deepak about five years of age respectively. Dr Gautam was a tall, fair, and extremely handsome man who looked so young that he could easily pass off as a college student of about 22. The intense gaze of his glistening eyes, the gesture of his sharp acquiline nose, the intent and lively expression on his face would indicate a strong personality with drive and determination. These combined with his physical vigour and agility, and

the facile way in which he could talk and lecture for hours together, made him a picturesque personality, endearing to his friends and pupils alike. At home he was a loving husband and doting father. His only complaint was that, being an extremely busy person, he had not time enough to devote to their wants and aspirations. However, at least twice a week he used to take his family out on long drives and for visiting friends' homes. Several friends and colleagues of his had formed a kind of club for this purpose and each member used to entertain others, including their families, by rotation once every week or ten days.

Neelima was a dapper little woman of medium-fair complexion and buxom build, with a moon-like face, small crescent forehead, large gleaming eyes shaded by delicately poised dark eyebrows, a small nose, thin lips, and long, luxuriant black hair. Though small in stature she was a pretty woman, almost like a Japanese doll. Her agility and tremendous vivacity were remarkable, and she managed the entire household with extraordinary efficiency. But with the tall, fair, and handsome Gautam, the comparatively short, dark, and comely Neelima formed rather an incongruous conjugal pair. This fact was well known to Dr Gautam's friends and colleagues, who amongst themselves referred to it as "the long and the short of it." Neelima realized very keenly this physical disparity between husband and wife, and on this account was rather loth to go out with him except to close friends and relatives. However, this did not interfere in the least in the extremely happy and cordial relationship between the pair. This was quite apparent from the fact that their children were equally devoted to both parents.

Amongst Gautam's students doing research work under his guidance was a girl, Naema Sultana Begam, who had passed the MBBS examination with distinction, and after working as a house surgeon in the attached medical college hospital for a year, was now engaged in doing research under Dr Gautam for

the MD degree. She was a brilliant student and had secured the coveted Empress Victoria Readership (research scholarship) of the college for three years for doing research work in a subject of her choice. She had chosen forensic medicine and toxicology as her subject of research and was assigned to Dr Gautam.

Naema hailed from a highly cultured and advanced aristocratic Muslim family of Lucknow. Her father Mirza Afzal Beg, ICS, was the commissioner of Moradabad division until about two years previously when he met with a motor accident and was killed. Since tnen his widowed wife Salina Begam, daughter Naema, and son Mirzafar had lived in their ancestral house—*Mir Manzil*—in Lucknow. At the time of our episode, Salina was about forty, Naema about twenty-three, and Mirzafar about sixteen years of age. Mirzafar was a BA student in the local college and was also bright.

Naema was an extremely pretty, vivacious girl and had figured as beauty queen in many beauty contests in the hill stations of north India. She was tall, fair, with large, wistful dark eyes, and shoulder-length luxuriant black hair glistening in curls around her glamorous face. With beautiful pastel-hued sari draped around a lissom frame like that of Michaelangelo's *Venus de Medici*, Naema had combined the conception of Western beauty with Oriental charm, and it was no wonder that she was an object of admiration for everyone she came across.

But not so was with Dr Gautam. He treated her with correct courtesy due to a respectable woman, and the kind regard and affection due to a student working under him. He did not treat her any differently solely because she was a girl, and a very attractive one to boot. Her fellow-students were however far more attentive towards her and would have made amorous advances but for the strict discipline imposed by Dr Gautam. Naema, however, was not particularly anxious to talk to anyone of them.

This was so because Naema was getting enamoured of Dr

Gautam, nearly twice her age and father of two children with a pretty and devoted wife. She heard with rapt attention the directions that he gave her regarding the conduct of her research work, but she did not remember a word of what he said afterwards. All the time her wistful eyes hovered about the extremely handsome features of his beaming face and lively personality. She was surprised that while she could stun any young man with a mere twinkle from her glamorous dark eyes, this stolid Adonis of a man was utterly immune to her dazzling charms. On the other hand, like a moth attracted to a blazing torch, she was being irrevocably drawn towards the cold lustre and invisible magnetism of his superb manhood.

As a kind of gracious gesture towards a woman student, Dr Gautam had allowed his sitting room in the college to be used by Naema whenever she wanted to take a respite from her arduous work in the laboratory. Naema used this opportunity by talking to Dr Gautam about various aspects of science and medicine in general, and her own subject of research in particular. Gradually, she would veer to political and social conditions in the country and social life in big cities. Slowly, she began to talk about Dr Gautam's social life, and ultimately she landed upon his family life, in which she seemed to evince great interest. Dr Gautam was very pleased and promised to take her home to meet his wife and children. The absent-minded Gautam, however, forgot about this until one summer afternoon Naema actually caught him starting his car for going home and reminded him of his promise. He immediately asked her to jump in. She sat next to him in the front seat and soon arrived at Dr Gautam's home.

Dr Gautam introduced Naema to Neelima and both seemed to be extremely pleased to make each other's acquaintence. Naema addressed Neelima as *Didi* (elder sister). The children were also very pleased with their new *gori* (fair) auntie who told them nice stories and gave them beautiful presents. After show-

ing all of them his fine garden and taking tea with them, Dr Gautam had to hurry away to an urgent call, and offered to take Naema with him and deposit her at her home on his way. Naema readily agreed, as it was already getting dark. On arriving at her home, she alighted from the car and requested Dr Gautam to do likewise, only for a minute or so in view of his urgency, so as to meet her mother and brother. He reluctantly agreed.

Naema's mother, Salina Begam, was an unusually attractive woman. She was so youthful that she looked like a sister of Naema instead of her mother. Dr Gautam seemed visibly impressed and astonished and felt greatly pleased in making her acquaintence. He talked with her for nearly half-an-hour, completely forgetting his urgent call, so highly engrossed was he with the charm of her personality. However, he got up and asked leave of her. She reluctantly agreed, but requested him to come again whenever he was free.

Thereafter, an extraordinary change seemed to have taken place over Dr Gautam. He had become very kind and sweet to Naema and would listen to all her requests and demands with great sympathy and understanding, instead of treating her coldly. Every weekend Dr Gautam accompanied Naema to her home to meet Salina and talk to her. He would even agree to take dinner with the family before returning home rather later at night. Naema was at first very pleased at this unexpected turn in the attitude of Dr Gautam. But she soon realized, to her utter dismay, that he was attracted towards her mother and not towards her, whom he treated only with the indulgence due to a child. The advances that Naema was making towards Dr Gautam by taking advantage of his presence at her home were being turned down by him as mere childish pranks with indifference. She could not make him vere round to the consciousness that she was a grown-up woman and was perfectly competent to frame her own destiny in the way she liked by attending

to her work and ministering to her pleasures as she wanted. Dr Gautam treated her only as an overgrown child, impulsive, and impatient but always deserving to be treated with kindness and sympathy and fatherly indulgence. All this was terribly exasperating to the high-strung Naema. She felt that her own mother was the greatest stumbling block in the way of her cherished goal, and she began to feel jealous of her. Her domestic life was therefore getting embittered by constant friction between her and her mother, often over trifles, and she was at a loss to understand how to get over them without complete estrangement between the two.

One day, casting aside all decency or decorum, she asked her mother point-blank whether she loved Dr Gautam and would like to marry him. To this the mother replied with real frankness that she indeed loved Dr Gautam who was the best man she had ever seen in her life, and would be only too glad to marry him. But this she thought to be utterly impossible, first because Dr Gautam was a Brahman and she a Muslim, and secondly because he was already a married man with children and she a widow with a grown-up daughter and a son. The very idea of a marriage between them was utterly unthinkable, and she only loved him with a plantonic affection and admired him for the supreme qualities of his head and heart. Naema heard all her mother said with rapt attention and then asked her a very delicate question with trembling voice: "Would you mind mother if I can manage to marry him?"

"Of course not, my girl, you will have my blessings if you can do so. But as far as I can see, he does not seem to be enamoured of you, he only treats you as a grown-up daughter or pupil. It is hardly likely that he would agree to marry you."

"That is my business mother, you may leave it to me." Naema sounded confident.

Next weekend, when Dr Gautam turned up at Naema's house, Salina was absent from home. He was on the point of

learning when Naema said: "Why don't you sit down and talk to me? What does it matter that my mother is absent? I am here and I love you much more than my mother does. I have been doing this ever since I became your student more than a year ago. I am much younger and far more attractive than my mother over whom you have been dotting for so many months. She does not like you. Please look at me. Don't you think that I am far more beautiful and better qualified to be your wife than your present wife Neelima? Wouldn't you wish that you had married me instead? I am being consumed with my unrequited love for you, Gautam, and without you I feel that life is a great void for me. Would you marry me?" She burst into tears and putting her arms around Dr Gautam's neck, sobbed heavily on his shoulder.

Gautam was so stunned by this sudden outburst of passion that he was speechless for several minutes and did not know what to say. However, he slowly gathered his wits, and taking the curly head of Naema on his shoulder and her lithe and heavily body in his arms, he gently placed her on the sofa and said: "Look here Naema, I love you dearly, but only as a father or an elder brother. My marrying you is utterly unthinkable. I am an already married man with a wife and children. It is inconceivable how I could marry you."

"Why, it is quite easy. You can embrace Islam, divorce your wife according to Muslim rites and then marry me. Alternatively, I could become a Hindu and then you could marry me as your second wife."

"Utterly unthinkable, Naema. What a revolting idea you are putting into my head! Why should I turn out my loving wife and dear children for no fault of theirs? It is a mere wildgoose chase and that also for the sake of a woman I do not really love. I would be doing the greatest injustice to my dear ones, and this would bring a slur on me in society and fling my hitherto brilliant and promising career to the winds. How could I do

that, Naema?"

The bitterly despondent Naema was becoming desperate. She sharply replied: "You are a rich man, Gautam; you can hire out another bungalow and keep me there as your unofficial wife. Hundreds of big people are doing this nowadays."

At this Dr Gautam flared up. "I thought that with all your faults you were a good girl, Naema. But now I find that you are no better than a mere strumpet. I am ashamed of you." The large, now listless eyes of Naema wallowing in a pond of tears instantly dried up and were belching fire. Her fair face flushed crimson, the corners of her mouth went up in a defiant and disdainful gesture and she got up from her seat with a start. She said a curt "Adabarz" (good-bye) to Dr Gautam, waved her hand and in an instant vanished from the scene like a hurricane. The stupified Gautam waited for a few minutes for her to reappear, and when this did not happen, he slowly made his way towards the door with a heavy heart. He reached his home in a dejected and pensive mood about midnight. Neelima was waiting for him with his dinner, but he did not take any food and went straight to bed. But it was only in the early hours of the morning that he could get a wink of sleep.

Next day he went to the college and to his research scholars working under him. Naema was absent. She did not come the day following and for many more days in succession. Dr Gautam felt anxious about her and sent his peon to her house to inquire. She informed the peon that she was very ill and would like Dr Gautam to come and diagnose her illness. Next evening Dr Gautam went to Naema's house after finishing his work in the college. He did not return home that night.

The following morning there was a banner headline in the papers: "Dr Gautam shot dead by girl student. Assistant arrested." On inquiry at the police station it transpired that on the previous night Dr Gautam had gone to attend to a student who had been ill. That student was no other than Naema, his

research scholar. It seemed that she was a mental patient, and in course of an altercation with Dr Gautam; she became violent, and getting hold of a loaded double-barreled shot-gun, she shot Dr Gautam dead with the discharge from one barrel. With the other she tried to commit suicide, but the cartridge misfired and she fell to the ground unconscious. Police soon appeared on the spot and removed the body of Dr Gautam for post-mortem examination. Naema was arrested and taken to the police station along with the murder weapon—a Westley Richards

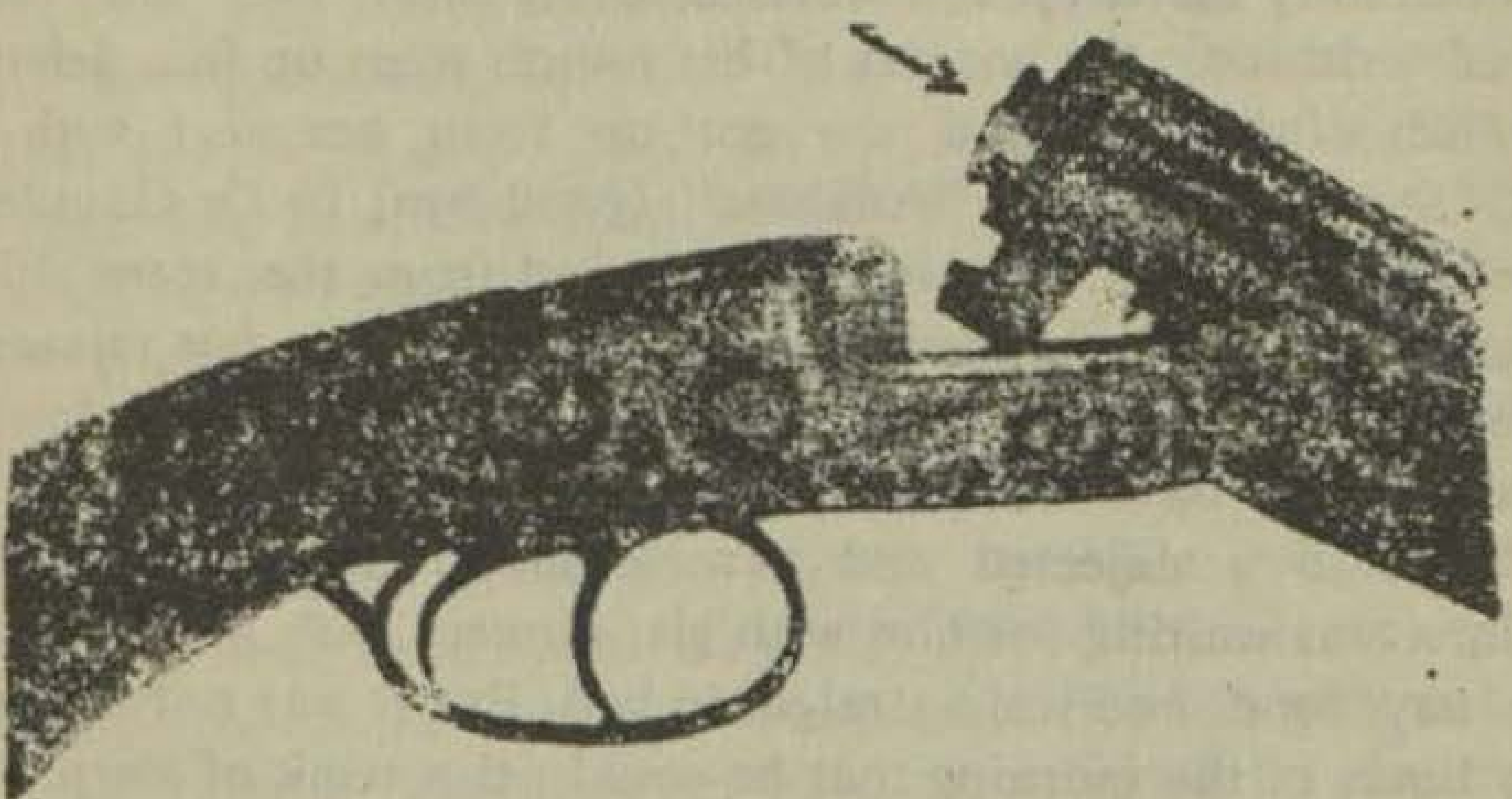


Figure 1. Westley Richard's 12-bore double barrel shot-gun used in the murder. Arrow shows the barrel with dud cartridge.

hammerless, non-ejector, 12-bore, double barrel shot-gun with one spent cartridge and another dud (misfired cartridge) in the respective chambers.

In the police station, Naema made a confession. She said she loved Dr Gautam with all her heart but he did not respond at all to her affection, was very cold towards her and on at least one occasion had scorned her as a strumpet. This so overwhelmed her that she wanted to end her life, as without Gautam she felt life was not worth living. But before ending her own life she thought of finishing Dr Gautam also, for the contemp-

tuous way in which he had rejected her love and the utter scorn with which he had called her a strumpet. She shot him down with one blast from the gun, but the other which she directed against her did not work. After this she fainted and did not know what had happened.

Later on, Naema, when produced before a Magistrate, completely denied the confession which she had made at the police station. From the police station she had gone home under police escort, met her family members and friends and also had consultations with her lawyers before she was produced before the magistrate. Apparently, she now retracted her confession under advice from these people. She made a statement before the magistrate that she was innocent and that Dr Gautam must have been murdered by his enemies and after the murder the dead body was planted in her house in order to implicate her. She did not know how to use a firearm and the gun in her house really belonged to her father who died two years previously. The gun was last used by him before his death. Gautam was very fond of her and often visited her in her house, trying to persuade her to marry him. But such a proposal was unthinkable to her and she had rejected this with contempt. Dr Gautam's running after her had created many enemies amongst her admirers who wanted to kill him. One of them must have been the murderer. She thought that her cousin Nasir, with whom there had been a marriage proposal for her, might be the culprit.

The post-mortem examination of Dr Gautam's body showed that he had been killed by a shot fired at point-blank range from a 12-bore shot-gun using buckshot (LG) ammunition. Five of the six LG shots had been recovered from inside the dead body. The felt and card wads of the fired cartridge were also recovered, sticking to the edge of the gaping wound. The sixth shot, which was missing, was recovered from near the place where the dead body lay. Apparently this must have

ricocheted from the brass button of the victim's blazer which he was wearing at that time and which was found to be dented by the shot. This missing shot recovered afterwards was identical in all respects with the five shots recovered from the dead body during the post-mortem examination. The first five had penetrated the left lung, the pericardium, and the left ventricle. Death must have been practically instantaneous.

Examination of the Westley Richard's shot-gun recovered from Naema's house showed that the right barrel had been very recently (less than 48 hours) fired Washings from the barrel gave strong colour reactions with sodium nitroprusside (crimson) and diphenylamine in concentrated sulphuric acid (indigo blue). The fired cartridge was a 12-bore Eley-Kynoch paper tube with brass end-plate, loaded with diamond brand smokeless powder and LG shots. The dud cartridge was exactly similar. It had misfired as the percussion cap had developed defects due to moisture. The indentation of the firing pin on the cap showed that the cap had been struck by the hammer of the gun, but it did not ignite by the percussion due to deterioration of the cap.

Two of Naema's neighbours testified before the magistrate that at about 11 P.M. on that fateful night they had heard the report of a gun-shot from her house and the piercing cry of a man in death-agony. One of them had informed the police about this by telephone. Naema was committed to sessions on a charge of murdering Dr Gautam by shooting him with a shotgun in her own house. Her cousin Nasir, whom she had indicted as a possible assasin of Dr Gautam, was also produced before the sessions court. There he testified that there had been a proposal for her marriage with him no doubt, but he had rejected it in view of the widely known scandal about her escapades with Dr Gautam. Further, he produced unimpeachable evidence that at the time of Dr Gautam's death he was in Moradabad and did not return to Lucknow until ten days later. He had

absolutely no cause for doing anything to Dr Gautam, much less to murder him in cold blood.

It was proved in the sessions court that contrary to her all protestations, Naema was an expert in handling firearms and had taken active part in many shikar parties organized by her and her relatives and friends. In fact, the licence for the Westley Richards shot-gun had been transferred to her name by her father about three years before and she was the owner of the gun. Endorsement on the licence showed that only about two months previously she had bought 20 Eley-Kynoch buckshot cartridges for the gun from a local ammunition shop. All these, and the fact that gunfire actually took place in her house and Dr Gautam was killed by gun-shot, left no doubt about the fact that Naema must have fired the fatal shot. But why she should do so and what her motive was in killing him whom she seemed to deeply love was not clear. A suggestion made by the defence that perhaps Naema was showing her gun to Dr Gautam and the latter was handling it in an inexpert manner when an accidental discharge took place from the loaded gun, killing him on the spot, was negatived by the fact that the gun had barrels 33 inches long, and it was quite impossible for Dr Gautam to receive the discharge from the barrel on his chest due to accidental tripping of the trigger. If the muzzle of the gun was held at his chest, his fingers could not reach the trigger under any circumstances. The trigger being a "double-pull" one, it could not fire the cartridge by a mere jerk on sudden shock.

In view of what has been stated above, the sessions judge convicted Naema under Section 302 IPC (murder) for the murder of Dr Gautam, but instead of awarding her the capital sentence, sentenced her to life imprisonment. This he did because at the time of the murder Naema was undoubtedly in a fit of passion and consequently of unsound mind (her attempt to commit suicide with the same weapon was tentatively proved), and the motive for the murder could not be clearly established by the

prosecution.

The High Court, on appeal, confirmed the conviction but reduced the sentence to ten years, as in its opinion also the motive for the murder could not be clearly established by the prosecution. The High Court also said that if Naema had stuck to her confession made at the police station and not retracted it afterwards, no court could convict her under Section 302 IPC. At the most she could then have been convicted under Section 304 IPC (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) for killing Dr Gautam under sudden and grave provocation. In that case her sentence would have been much less. But now the courts were helpless as she had chosen to retract her confession as an afterthought. Apparently she had not been correctly advised.

Jealous Concubine Commits Triple Murder

THIS IS the amazing case of a young woman of 31, from a well known business community in the capital. At the age of 18 and after passing the Punjab Matriculation examination, she was married to a young man of 25 having a grocery shop within the walled city. When, after eight years of married life, she had no children, her mother-in-law thought that she was a *baj* (barren woman) and was unfit to be a daughter-in-law in a Hindu family. She advised her son to marry again and throw his unproductive wife out. The son wanted to oblige, but was morbidly afraid of his high-tempered and terribly pugnacious wife, whom his mother had branded a witch. He realized that if he married again, with this woman anywhere near, his life would be in danger. He therefore fled to Ludhiana where he started a grocery business over again. There he quietly married once more and soon enough he had a family of two children. His previous wife, deserted in such an inhuman and cadlike manner, was courageous and resourceful enough to start a novel business of her own, which proved to be quite lucrative and popular at the same time. It was her "Family Planning" clinic in which she was actively helped by her brother-in-law (husband's younger brother) who was a *vaid* (Ayurvedic physician) by profession and was well trained. Several years her junior, he continued to live with her as husband. She was a passionate woman and treated her paramour with more consideration and attention than she had her own husband. He also found in the concubine a source of care-

free and comfortable life without the necessity of his making the least effort for such a happy-go-lucky existence. But there is a well known saying in Hindi *aram haram hai*, meaning that too much comfort is a curse in disguise. His carefree existence led him to cast his covetous eyes on other women, particularly on three young girl employees of the clinic, who were good-looking and constantly before his eyes His continuous flirtations with these girls annoyed his concubine who remonstrated with him many times and warned him that if he did not mend his ways, she would be compelled to dismiss all of them from her service. All such warnings and threats proved utterly useless and she finally made up her mind to remove all the irritants in one sweep. She planned her strategy for this grim purpose very carefully, and in accordance with the plan, administered a powerful poison to all four of them in some exclusive sweets prepared by her. By sheer luck, her paramour escaped death, as being unwell he did not take any food at that fateful tea party to which they were invited. All the three girls who partook of the delicious sweets expired during the night. I was personally responsible in detecting and identifying the position. This led to the apprehension and conviction of the concubine who was sentenced to death for the triple murder in the sessions court. All her appeals to higher courts failed, as did an appeal for mercy to the President of India. She was executed in due course. She was perhaps the first woman in living memory who was executed for murder. The amazing story of this breath-taking episode is narrated in the following pages.

Of all the queer places in this sprawling city of slums and mansions housing a motley population drawn from all parts of India, probably the most interesting was the family planning clinic run by Hira Bai Dhawan. It was a neat little business premises consisting of office, waiting room, consulting chamber, dispensary, godown, living quarters, etc. all kept spick and span by the care and attention bestowed on them by the energetic

little proprietress. Situated in the greatest of all slums on earth, euphemistically called the Chandni Chowk, it was indeed the right kind of institution at the right place, calculated to stem the tide of teeming millions flowing out like floodwaters from homes in the old city. But what was actually being done inside the clinic, what kind of clientale she had, or what her qualifications were or title to run a clinic of that sort could not be known, for the entire business was veiled in secrecy and the people visiting her would not divulge it for obvious reasons.

In her own family life, however, Hira Bai revealed a complete lack of plan, for although married for over ten years, she had no child of her own, and this led to utter estrangement between her husband Mahendra Prasad and herself. Mahendra Prasad, who was a shopkeeper, married again and soon had a family of two children. He left Delhi and went over to Ludhiana where he set up his business afresh. Left to herself and deserted, by her husband, Hira Bai set up the family planning clinic, and in this she was being actively helped by her brother-in-law (Mahendra Prasad's younger brother) Gorakh Prasad who was a vaid and was trying to establish a practice in Chandni Chowk.

Gorakh Prasad was a bachelor, very active and energetic, and was the real brain behind the entire show of the clinic. Hira Bai was posing as the physician to interview the innocent stream of women who were coming to the clinic, some for getting medicine for sterility, some for one-child barrenness and some for over-fertility, for each of whom she would prescribe some medicine or other, or at least a "charm" or a "talisman" (Urdu-tabiz) to be worn on the body. The business was a highly flourishing one, yielding enormous spoils out of the ignorance and superstition of most Indian women, and Hira Bai and Gorakh Prasad were living in grand style—as husband and wife.

As business increased, Hira Bai had to take some assistants to help her with clients, and gradually, one after another, three young refugee girls—Kanti, Satyavati, and Henarani—were emp-

loyed in her clinic. Although hailing from impoverished refugee families settled in Delhi, these three girls were quite pretty and charming, and the clients visiting Hira Bai's clinic were highly impressed by their smartness and efficiency.

Gorakh Prasad was on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand there was Hira Bai, once quite good looking but now the bloom of youth long passed, with whom he was living quite comfortably out of the spoils of the shady business. On the other hand, there were the three spirited girls now constantly before him, any one of whom could gladden his heart and make for him a happy home and family. Instead of living a shameful and clandestine life with a faded woman and a fretful and nagging wench, several years his senior, and getting fat on her ill-gotten wealth, he could lead a happy and honourable existence with a lawfully wedded wife and carry on with his legitimate profession of vaid in which he was properly qualified and interested. Was not that infinitely more desirable than what he was doing at present?

In Hira Bai's clinic Kanti was working as a clerk and accountant, Satyavati as a storekeeper and dispenser, and Henarani as the personal assistant of Hira Bai. All three were between twenty and twenty-two years of age. Kanti was an ever-smiling, vivacious girl with a golden voice; even her whispers would sound like music wafting from after. Satyavati was like a waxen doll with an exquisite child-like face and ivory complexion. Her chiselled face and figure would be the dream of an artist. She could have adorned the palace of a king. Henarani, although comparatively dark in complexion, had features of a Greek queen and was the most witty and intelligent of the three. She was an exceptionally good conversationalist and would indeed keep the clients spellbound by her sparkling humour and entertaining talk.

Hira Bai had remonstrated with Gorakh Prasad several times for his paying too much attention to these girls and neglecting

his own work in the clinic. Once or twice she had even threatened to dismiss the girls and run the clinic without any assistants. But nothing would prevail upon Gorakh Prasad to mend his ways. Like a moth attracted to a torch, he was being invariably and irrevocably drawn to the flame of radiant womanhood,.and by his indecision was being tossed between the fires. He had so completely lost his personality that he was at his wit's end to know what to do.

Hira Bai had, however, made up her mind. Her coolness under grave provocations and her outwardly composure were indeed the lull before the storm. Jealousy was eating away her heart, almost driving her mad with morbid thoughts verging on desperation. In her mind's eye she would see lurid sights concerning Gorakh Prasad and the girls, and the same nightmare would haunt her even in her sleep. She would wake up in the dead of night in a cold sweat. High-strung as she was, she was fast getting into a complete neurosis.

One Sunday afternoon, Hira Bai invited the girls to tea at her place and treated them quite sumptuously with sweets, amongst which there was the delicious *pera* prepared by Hira Bai herself. She had made a name for herself in making this excellent preparation and it was indeed a great speciality of her's. The girls were very happy and so was Gorakh Prasad, who attended to them in high spirits and good humour. Hira Bai as usual was in a pensive mood, although from time to time she was trying to put on a dry, laconic smile. Her mind and thoughts appeared to be drifting far away.

Next day, the family planning clinic was closed, as Hira Bai had left town early in the morning. Towards the afternoon Gorakh Prasad was reading a book seated in the balcony of the clinic when a police officer, with a few of constables arrived. He inquired about Hira Bai and was told by Gorakh Prasad that she had left, most probably by the early morning train, for an undisclosed destination. The police officer said that he had a

warrant for the arrest of Hira Bai in connection with the mysterious death of her three girl employees who had suddenly become seriously ill the previous night and had died before anything could be done to save them. Two of them had been taken to Darwin Hospital and there they had made dying declarations that only last evening they were entertained at a tea party where they were treated to sweets by Hira Bai, and after eating the *pera* made by her, they left very unwell and on reaching home they contracted cholera with serious vomitting and purging. The third girl could not be brought to the hospital before she died, and so her dying declaration could not be recorded. The bodies of all the three girls had been sent for post-mortem examination. He also said that there was grave suspicion that Hira Bai must have administered some poison to the girls in the *pera* made by her.

Police searched the clinic and could collect traces of a white powder lying on a table on which Gorakh Prasad had seen Hira Bai on the previous noon preparing *pera*. He in fact recollected that she had made four for the party, three for the girls and one for Gorakh Prasad, but as he was not well that day, he did not take any sweets at all. The girls took one each, and the fourth being extra, they divided it amongst themselves.

The post-mortem examination of the girls' bodies showed that they had died of poisoning and the chemical examination revealed that the poison was white arsenic which was present in large quantities. In fact, the quantity of arsenic administered to each girl was more than sufficient to kill a dozen people. The traces of the white powder collected by police from Hira Bai's kitchen table was also found on chemical examination by me to be white arsenic.

Hira Bai was arrested by the police at a wayside station and was brought back to the capital. On inquiry, it was soon discovered that on the previous Saturday afternoon Hira Bai had bought one tola of arsenic from the dispensary of Hakim

Jagannath Prasad and had signed his 'poison register." On examination of the register, however, it was found that the part of it containing Hira Bai's signature had been tampered with and the signature was no longer legible. On photographing this portion under filtered ultra-violet light. the effect of the tamper-

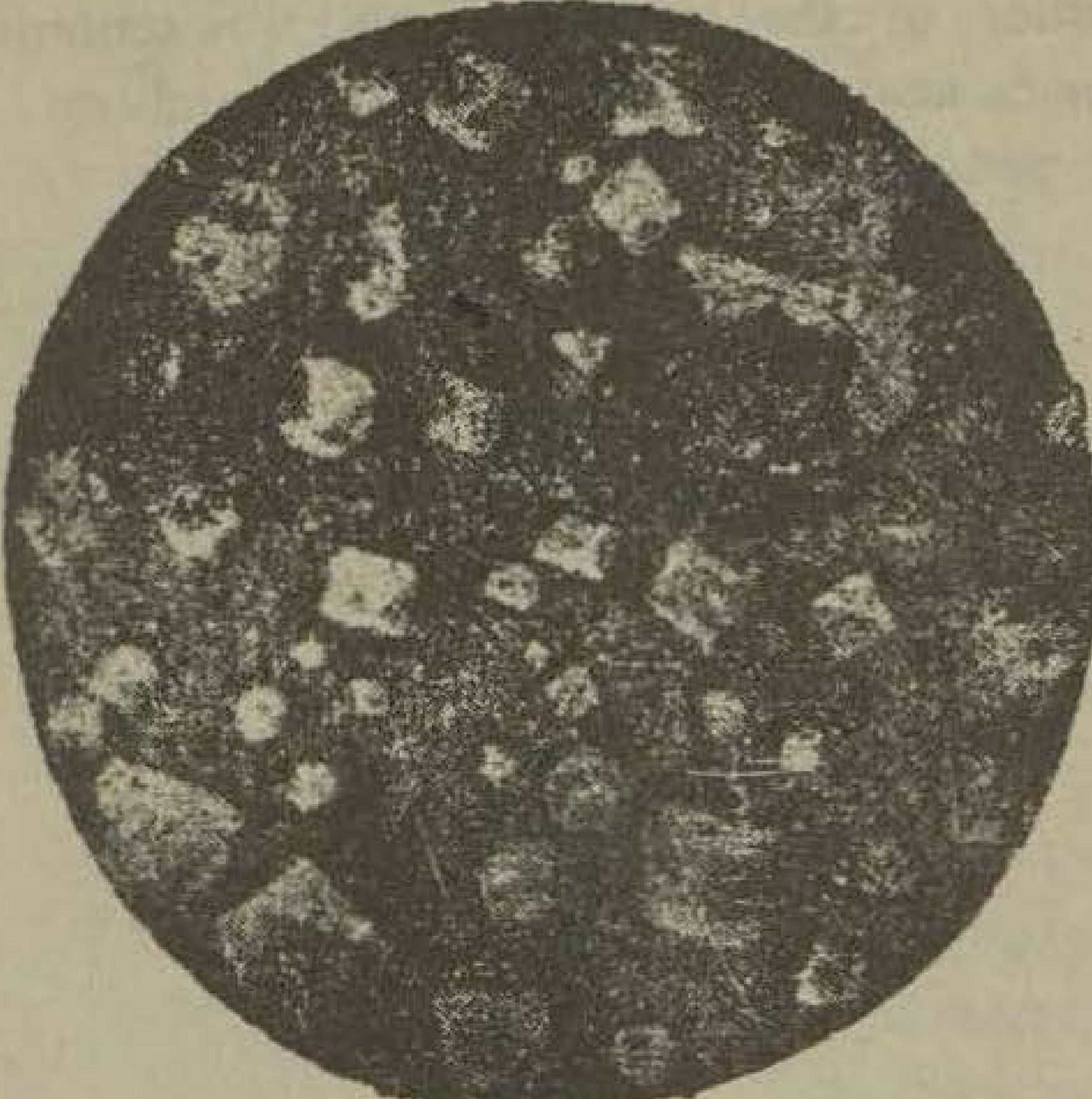


Figure 1. Micro-photograph of crystals of white arsenic (fast deadly killer) in polarized light

ing was overcome and the clear signature of Hira Bai was obtained, which left no doubt at all that Hira Bai had in fact signed the register when she bought the poison, in accordance with government regulations.

A thorough search of Hira Bai's premises by the police failed to reveal any trace of that arsenic bought from the hakim. She also could not give any explanation of its disappearance from her clinic, and it assumed sinister significance with the simultaneous death of her three girl employees by arsenic poisoning after partaking of *pera* made by her in the fateful tea party on

Sunday afternoon. Hira Bai's wits were at an end and she completely broke down during interrogation by the police. She was committed to sessions, charged with triple murder.

Hira Bai could hardly defend herself in view of the formidable evidence gathered against her. The odds were now overwhelming against her. After a short trial she was found guilty of the murder of the three girls and was sentenced to death. All her appeals against the sentence failed and she had to pay the extreme penalty of the law.

Grim Murderess Avenges Gross Betrayal

ONE OF the legacies of British rule in India was the evolution of the Anglo-Indian community, settled in gregarious groups or colonies in various parts of the country, particularly in UP, in towns and cities like Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Chunar, Allahabad, Agra, Jhansi and the like. The fair-skinned amongst them called themselves Europeans, and the darker ones Anglo-Indians or Indian Christians. As a community they enjoyed many rights and privileges under the British regime, such as cheap reserved accommodation on the railway ("European Third" bogie), reserved posts in the army, police, railway, telegraph and telephone departments of the government as non-commissioned officers, superintendents and deputy superintendents of police, station masters, guards and engine drivers (European Grade), telegraphists and telephone operators and so on. Their womenfolk were also employed as teachers in European and Anglo-Indian schools, as nurses in civil and railway hospitals, as lady superintendents in big railway stations, and almost exclusively as telephone operators. The railway and the telegraph departments were their special preserves, where sometimes more than 30 per cent of the technical and administrative posts were manned by Anglo-Indians. The women of the community were often handsome, pretty or even beautiful when young, but due to the fast life that they usually led, they lost their charm when they grew older. As a community they never believed in higher, or university education, and after passing the senior cambridge

or higher secondary examination most of them entered some service or other for earning their living. On very rare occasions, however, a male or female member of the community crossed the portals of a university for earning the Bachelor's or Master's degree therefrom. But these were very exceptional cases.

The case of Susan Thompson, a beautiful Anglo-Indian girl of Sahabad, was one such exception. After taking the B.Sc. degree from a women's college in Lucknow, she took her admission in the Sahabad University for the M.Sc. degree in botany. Her father, captain David Thompson, an ex-army officer and presently a senior guard in the railways, was stationed at Sahabad. Thompson's progress in the M Sc. Previous class of the university was smooth and she was promoted to the M Sc. Final class as a matter of routine. In the M.Sc Final in Botany, she took to specialization in plant physiology and offered to submit a thesis on the subject in lieu of the general papers for which written examinations were held. Thus she came under the special charge and direction of Dr Niranjan, reader in botany in the university and specialist on the subject.

Dr Niranjan Shah, who dropped his surname ' Shah" on entering university service, was the only son of Lala Bhagawan-Dass, a multimillionaire businessman of Banaras. Contrary to the customs and traditions of the *Lala* (Vaish) community, young Niranjan opted for higher education at university and passed the B.Sc. and the M.Sc. examinations of the Banaras Hindu University in botany, getting a third class in the former and a second class in the latter. Lala Bhagawan Dass then made a generous donation to the Sahabad University and as the result thereof, Niranjan was taken up as a lecturer in botany. In this capacity Niranjan worked for about three years and thereafter went at his own expense to an obscure university in France, and within about six months, returned home with the Ph. D. degree. Thus he could use the cherished prefix "Doctor" before his name. This was a remarkable feat for Niranjan, but evil

tongues in the university said that Niranjan in France was enjoying himself most of the time in Paris, and before returning home he literally purchased the Ph.D. from the university by paying a heavy sum. At that time there were many such universities in Europe and America from which degrees and diplomas could be bought even by value payable post (VPP). In any case, Niranjan was lucky, as none of the university authorities questioned his doctorate, but on the contrary promoted him to the readership in botany in the university in recognition of his great scholarship and the high distinction he received from a foreign university. The price paid for this promotion must have been heavy, but none could tell the sum involved in the transaction.

Soon after this Dr Niranjan constructed a big bungalow for his residence and bought a shining Chevrolet saloon for his transport. He put up a large signboard in front of his house: "Dr Niranjan, M.Sc. (Banaras), Ph.D. (France), Reader in Chemistry, Sahabad University." He employed a galaxy of servants including a gate keeper, several malis for laying extensive lawns and flower gardens in his new bungalow, a khansama for preparing European food for him in a separate kitchen, and a bearer for running his errands and taking his books and papers to the university. He gave sumptuous dinners at his home to which the elite of the city and the VIPs of the university were invited and treated with delicious food and exotic wines. With such expensive tactics, he became a very popular figure in the city and one of the most powerful men in the university administration with membership of the executive council.

Dr Niranjan was a tall, dark, hefty man, slightly balding and wavy black hair, a rotund chubby face, narrow forehead, snubbish nose, and small brown gleaming eyes. In view of his origin from the Bania community of UP, he was regarded as quite handsome despite his flabby constitution and bulging tummy. He wore a smiling face and was a good talker, particularly in the presence of ladies. With a glint in his eyes and a

lewd smile on his face, Dr Niranjan was in his elements in the presence of pretty young women whom he would quickly charm with his entertaining talk. He was thus a ladies' man and would always edge towards them in a social gathering.

Janki Devi, his wife, was diametrically opposite to him in all respects. She was a dapper little woman of medium height, wheaten complexion, buxom build with long black hair, and large dark and gleaming eyes. She was in fact quite a pretty woman bordering on the plump side. The expression on her face, however, was not a happy one. With a furrowed brow, a drawn face, and a tightly closed mouth with upturned corners in thin lips, she always seemed to be in a state of nervous depression verging on despair. Her angry shrill voice could always be heard from inside the house taking the servants to task, or fuming at her husband or her grown-up daughter Minakshi. According to the Vaish community traditions, she was married to Niranjan at the age of 13, with her husband only 18. Within a year her daughter was born and she had no child thereafter. At the time of our episode, Janki was 30, Dr Niranjan 35 and their daughter Minakshi 16, and due to be married in two months' time. Janki Devi was very orthodox, a pure vegetarian who would not touch European food prepared for Dr Niranjan by his khansama and which he partook of in his dining room. The mother and the daughter took their food in their own kitchen.

The advent of Susan Thompson as a M.Sc. student in botany in the university was hailed with great interest by Dr Niranjan, but he could not make much headway in becoming familiar with her during her stay in the M.Sc. Previous class. The class was a large one with her as the only girl student amidst numerous boys who seemed to surround her and bar any outside approach. When she arrived in the M.Sc. Final class and took up specialization in plant physiology directly under the guidance and direction of Dr Niranjan, he thought that at long last he had

the opportunity of a lifetime for his cherished desire being fulfilled.

Susan Thompson was a beautiful girl of 21, tall, slim, and lissom, with a complexion like old ivory—so much liked in India in preference to the livid white of the European. Her rippling chestnut-brown shoulder-length bobbed hair, crescent forehead, large dark brown gleaming eyes arched over with delicately poised eyebrows and shaded by long eyelashes, gave a charming expression to her visage, and her white pearly teeth lighted up like sunshine amidst her melodious giggles. Formerly she used to wear her national costume of frock and petticoat or blouse and skirt always, but on coming to the university, she was persuaded by her girl friends to discard them in favour of the sari and choli, which accentuated her charm considerably and made her one of the prettiest girls in the university.

Dr Niranjan was now in his elements. He cast his "glad eye" on her at every opportunity and was constantly by her side during practical work in the laboratory. When she wanted rest from the strenuous work, he called her to his sitting room and talked with her often on subjects other than botany, and their hilarious laughter could be heard by students outside. Before long he began to dote on her much to the dismay and chagrin of the boy students. Susan used to come to the university on her bicycle. Occasionally, when she worked overtime and it was already dusk before leaving, Dr Niranjan used to reach her home in his car, taking her bicycle also in the luggage carrier. Soon this became a daily practice. Rumours spread in the university about the amorous escapades of the pair after dusk. Thereafter Dr Niranjan changed his tactics. He sent the girl on her bicycle to his house well before evening for receiving "research instructions" there, as he was too busy in the department and had no time to give them there. Dr Niranjan would arrive soon thereafter, and the pair talked and talked till late in the evening. Then she was sent back home in the car with the driver.

Mrs Niranjan viewed this nightly gossip between the pair with intense disapproval, but she was silenced by her husband when he said that he was only giving research instructions to his student at home for which he had no time in the university, and that she should not interfere in these academic matters which she did not understand. Unfortunately, Mrs Niranjan did not know a word of English and Susan any Hindi. Mrs Niranjan, however, was very busy in the evening as she went shopping every evening. After she returned home at about 9 P.M., Susan was sent back.

One evening, while Mrs Niranjan was returning from market the car developed engine trouble and no amount of coaxing would start the engine again. The driver left the car and went in search of a mechanic. He was long in returning and Mrs Niranjan, who was sitting in the car, was fed up with waiting. So she took a tonga and quietly returned home. To her surprise she found nobody in the drawing room, and from the adjacent bedroom, which she found bolted from inside, muffled voices of Niranjan and Susan were filtering through. She banged at the door with all her might and shouted at the top of her voice to open the door. When the door was opened after a little while, she found Susan sitting on a bedside chair with her hair dishevelled and dress in utter disarray. The bed also seemed badly disturbed. Mrs Niranjan made a quick survey of the entire situation, and casting a firey glance at the embarrassed and crest-fallen pair, disappeared from the room.

Next morning, Mrs Niranjan, who could not get a wink of sleep during the previous night and was on the verge of nervous collapse, burst into her husband's room, and after fuming and fretting for some time, told him in no uncertain terms that if he brought that *randi* (harlot) home again, she would go to the vice-chancellor of the university and ask him dismiss Dr Niranjan for scandelous misconduct with his student, Susan, who was about the age of his daughter Minakshi. Dr Niranjan

was terribly upset by the firey outburst from his wife and begged of her not to take such a drastic step as that would ruin him for life. He promised never to bring Susan home again.

He kept his promise, but it soon transpired that he was visiting Susan at her own house every evening. Her father, captain Thompson, was a widower and Susan was running his home with the help of an old maidservant as cook-cum-house-keeper. Thompson was very often absent from home on guard duty on the railways, and Susan remained practically alone in the house. How long Dr Niranjan was carrying on with Susan in this manner was not known, but one morning in early January, captain Thompson went to the vice-chancellor of the university with a most serious complaint against Dr Niranjan, under whom his Susan was studying. Taking advantage of his position as her teacher and guide, and also the frequent absence of the captain from home, he had seduced her with the result that she was now about three month's pregnant and in a delicate state of health. He asked the vice-chancellor to turn him out of the university as he was a menace to society. Captain Thompson was determined to teach him the lesson of his life unless he married Susan immediately, and if this was not possible, pay her damages of Rs 10,000. The vice-chancellor promised to look into this serious matter and do the needful as soon as possible.

Next day, the vice-chancellor called Dr Niranjan to his office and told him that he had committed a serious breach of university discipline, for which he must immediately resign, failing which there would be no alternative but to take drastic action against him, ruining him for life. Dr Niranjan quickly understood the gravity of the situation and begged of him to pardon him this time, for which he would be ready to do anything that the vice-chancellor wanted. The vice-chancellor said that he would pardon Dr Niranjan if he promised to be of good behaviour in future and pay Rs 10,000 to the university poor boys' fund as a token of his promise. He should also pay an equal

amount to Miss Thompson as compensation demanded by her father.

Dr Niranjan did as promised and paid Rs 10,000 to the university. After this when he went to Susan's house to pay the Rs 10,000-compensation, Captain Thompson was away from home and Susan was alone in the house. She refused to accept the money, saying that he must marry her as no amount of money could be a recompense for the grave injury he had done to her. Dr Niranjan left disappointed, but soon after he came there again when captain Thompson was at home and quietly handed over to him the money. He accepted it without uttering a word and pointed his finger to the door for Dr Niranjan to leave immediately. The latter left posthaste, breathing a sigh of relief at the deliverence.

The vice-chancellor passed a confidential order to Susan, asking her to leave the university from 1 February, on "sick leave" and not come there again. She was, however, permitted to appear in the M.Sc. Final examination of the university to be held in March-April, if she so desired. She, however, left the university immediately on the receipt of the order without waiting for February to come a fortnight afterwards. Physically, she had already become out of shape and was growing worse every day. She felt ashamed to come out in public as people had already begun to talk about her. She left the university for good.

After that memorable event, many sad occurrences had taken place. Mrs Niranjan, who had been suffering from gastric troubles, suddenly died from a severe attack of appendicites soon after an operation in the civil hospital. Susan, when taking an evening ride on her bicycle, suddenly tumbled on a stone on the road, fell from the bicycle and hurt herself badly. Serious haemorrhage necessitated her immediate removal to the railway hospital, where she had an abortion. She narrowly escaped death and was confined to the hospital for nearly a fortnight.

After discharge from the hospital, she took up a post as a science teacher in a local girls' high school run by the Christian community. In the school she met a fellow teacher, Shirin Gilani, a beautiful Sindhi Christian girl about her own age, with whom she became very friendly. Miss Gilani was living in an apartment house close to that of Susan's, and often in the evening they would visit each other.

Nearly nine months had passed since Susan had left university. Cool and pleasant winter had given place to the blazing heat of summer followed by the deluge of the rainy season and the sweltering heat of early October. November came in its wake with its pleasant coolness enabling people to sit indoors in the evening. On such an evening Susan was pleasantly surprised to find Dr Niranjan at her place, inquiring about her health. He informed her of the sad news of Mrs Niranjan's death about nine months before and said that now he was free to marry her in about three months' time, when the mourning period was over. He could never forget her and his heart was full of love and affection for her. He gave her a diamond ring as a token of his promise to marry her in another three months' time. Susan was overjoyed, and after exchanging pleasantries and old reminiscences, she asked him to come again and see her as often as he could. Thereafter, Dr Niranjan's visits to Susan became almost a daily affair. To this the captain also had no objection in view of his promise to marry Susan.

One such evening, when Dr Niranjan arrived, he found that Susan was talking to Miss Gilani who had arrived earlier. Susan introduced Miss Gilani to Dr Niranjan as her friend and colleague in the school where she was working, and said that Dr Niranjan was her teacher in the university, and now her friend. Dr Niranjan was so struck by the extraordinary beauty and attractive charm of Miss Gilani and her witty and entertaining talk that he could hardly open his mouth to speak. With wide open eyes he seemed to be swallowing her with his gaze.

However, when Miss Gilani was leaving, he warmly shook her hand and with a broad grin said that they would meet again.

Thereafter, Dr Niranjan's visit to Susan began to be less frequent, and after a couple of months, ceased altogether. One evening, while going about on her bicycle, Susan noticed Dr Niranjan's car at the gate of Miss Gilani's house, and Dr Niranjan nowhere to be seen. Dismounting from her bicycle and leaving it at the gate, she stealthily approached Miss Gilani's apartment. From her closed sitting-cum-bedroom, Susan could hear Dr Niranjan and Miss Gilani in very endearing and animated conversation. They were apparently drinking sherry—Miss Gilani's favourite drink—together. Susan felt her heart beating violently and blood rushing to her head. She was almost in a fit. She rushed back to her bicycle and pedelling at break-neck speed, reached home dazed. She went straight to bed without dinner, but could not get a wink of sleep that night. In her mind's eye she could see lurid sights concerning Niranjan and Shirin. However, with the light of the dawn tinging the eastern sky and filtering into her room, she soon got over her nightmare and was her own normal self once again. She dismissed the episode as a bad dream.

A few days after this event, Susan met Miss Gilani after school in the deserted teachers' common room, and asked her whether Dr Niranjan had been seeing her in the evening. Shirin frankly admitted that he was coming to her every evening, and they took light drinks and snacks together. Dr Niranjan was madly in love with her and had promised to marry her after a month when the mourning period for his late wife would be over. Shirin showed Susan the diamond engagement ring that Dr Niranjan had given her for this purpose. As Dr Niranjan was unwilling to become a Christian for the marriage, they had decided to marry under the Civil Marriages Act, for which a month's notice had already been given to the registrar of civil marriages as required under the Act. Shirin admitted that inti-

macy had already taken place between them in view of the impending marriage. Susan heard with rapt attention the sordid tale of Dr Niranjan's latest love affair and keeping her overwhelming emotions suppressed with a prodigious effort, coolly told Shirin her entire story of love and betrayal by Dr Niranjan. In the end she warned Shirin that if she continued with the scoundrel Niranjan, she might suffer the same fate. She advised her to break off with Niranjan immediately. Shirin quietly heard Susan's tirades against Niranjan, but did not seem to be impressed.

As a devout Christian, Shirin did not do any work or see any visitor on Sundays, and hence on that day Dr Niranjan was expected to be at home. Susan therefore went to see him on a Sunday evening. Finding him there as expected, Susan asked him point-blank why he had deserted her after solemnly promising to marry her. Dr Niranjan was taken aback and upset by Susan's unexpected appearance at his house. But gathering his wits, he said that he loved her very dearly and would be marrying her as promised, but just at present he was so extremely busy with urgent official work in the university that he did not find time to visit his friends, not even his dearest Susan. However, he expected to be a little more free soon, when he would begin to comply with his social engagements. Susan heard these lame excuses with contemptuous disbelief in her eyes, but with heaving emotions and swelling rage she could not contain herself any longer. In a violent outburst she called him a hell-hound and the worst type of scoundrel that she could think of. She had come to know all about his despicable escapades with Miss Gilani. After ruining the life of an innocent girl by his vile tactics, he was now out to repeat the same on another. She warned him that if he did not stop his nefarious activities and break off immediately with Miss Gilani, he would meet with a disastrous and ignoble end soon enough. And before the dumbfounded Dr Niranjan could utter a word, Susan rushed out of

the room and vanished like a ghost into the darkness outside.

A few days after this incident, there was a gruesome tragedy at the house of Miss Gilani. Late one evening there was a terrific commotion in her apartment, and when neighbours rushed there on hearing the shrill and agonized cries, they found Dr Niranjan lying prostrate on the floor and Miss Gilani lying close by, their clothes blotched with big patches of blood which was still oozing out in trickles. They had apparently been shot by an unknown assassin, but the most surprising part of the ghastly episode was that nobody ever heard the report of any gunfire. Police were informed and they soon arrived. On arrival they found Dr Niranjan to be already dead and Miss Gilani in an unconscious state, breathing faintly. They removed the dead body to the morgue for post-mortem examination and Miss Gilani to the hospital for emergency treatment. The police could not derive any information from the neighbours assembled there regarding the assassin, as they never heard the report of any gun. Miss Gilani's maidservant, who was cooking in the kitchen at the time of the incident, said that she heard some sound like thumping on the floor, from the direction of Miss Sahib's room where she and her fiance – Dr Niranjan—was sitting and drinking sherry together. Soon she heard the cries of Miss Sahib in agony. She rushed to the room, but on finding the leading door bolted from inside she had to come by the outside route, where neighbours had already collected. While rushing there, she found a tall young woman dressed in a black sari and with her face completely veiled running away towards the gate. She had a baton-like short stick in her hand.

In the hospital, Miss Gilani who was in a coma, became conscious for a brief spell early in the morning. She could not answer any questions by the police regarding the assassin. She only said three words: "Oh! Soussie, Soussie" before relapsing into the coma from which she never recovered. The end came at about 9 A.M. Her dead body was also sent for post-mortem

examination.

The post-mortem report by the police surgeon revealed an amazing story. It said that Dr Niranjan died of multiple bullet injuries from a country-made pistol, fired at him at point-blank range by an unknown assasin. One bullet had entered the right temple and after passing through the cerebrum and part of the cereballam, had lodged behind the medulla oblongata. A second bullet had entered the right thorax and after passing through the right lung, the right pulmonary artery, the pericardium, had lodged in the left lung close to the left third rib. Three more shots which had been fired at the victim entered the right abdomen. Of these, two, after passing through the lower lobe of the liver, the omentum, the transverse colon and the descending colon, were lodged in the upper pelvis. The fifth and the last shot followed a similar course through the fatty and slimy tissues of the small and the large intestine, and after puncturing the skin at the left lower abdomen, had lodged between the skin and the upper left flap of the trousers of the victim. These was the only bullet which had come out of the body, all the other four remained inside. The post-mortem report on Miss Gilani's body said that she died of injuries from a bullet fired at the right side of her body which entered the main lobe of the liver, reducing it to pulp. The bullet also passed through the transverse colon and was lodged in the lower part of the large intestine. Death was due to shock and extensive haemorrhage in the vital parts of the body. In the case of Dr Niranjan, the shot in the temple was fatal, causing instentaneous death. The other four shots were unnecessary. The post-mortem report also said that at the time of her death, Miss Gilani was pregnant for about two months.

The post-mortem report as well as the six bullets extracted from the dead bodies were brought to me by the police for examination and elucidation of the baffling mystery of the grim tragedy.

At the very start of my examination, I was surprised to find that the bullets had undoubtedly been fired by a factory-made revolver and not a country-made pistol as stated in the post-mortem report. A country-made pistol is a smooth-bore abbre-viated shot-gun made clandestinely in the country, and firing ordinary 12 bore shot-gun ammunition. For ballistic reasons it can only fire a round ball and not an elongated bullet like all rifled arms such as rifles, pistols, and revolvers. The bullets under my examination were beautifully made in a factory of hardened lead, elongated and nosed. and surfaced with three graduated autogenous driving bands. They were one inch long with a base diameter of 0.455 inch Each bullet had five im-pressions of the "lands" of the firearm deeply imprinted on the bottom driving band with a left-hand twist of about 30 degrees to the vertical From these and other precision data, I came to the definite conclusion that the bullets had been fired from a Colt (American made) 0.455 bore service revolver used in the English and the Indian armies, the use of which is prohibited for the public. Although the revolver was American made, the cartridges firing the bullets were made in England, by Eley-Kynoch, a famous firm of ammunition manufacturers of that country.

But the most baffling part of the whole problem was that while an Eley-Kynoch cartridge fired from a service revolver makes a deafening report, no report of any kind was heard by anybody, including immediate neighbours, when the ghastly tragedy was enacted at the house of Miss Gilani. Another mys-tery seemed to be the comparatively poor power and perfor-mance of the cartridges. An Eley-Kynoch service revolver car-tridge on firing, develops a muzzle velocity of about 600 feet per second and has a muzzle energy of about 1,350 foot-pounds. With such velocity and energy, a bullet of this kind, when fired at close quarters will pass through a human body with the greatest ease, piercing and shattering all obstructions, including

bones on the way. But in the present case, all the bullets remained inside the body after passing through only soft tissue, with the exception of only one bullet which pierced the interior abdominal skin and was lodged between the exterior skin surface and the left upper flap of the trousers. This poor performance could however be explained by the fact of the cartridges being over-aged and deteriorated. Mathematical calculations showed that they could be 18-20 years old.

I felt certain that the assailant, after completing of his grim mission with such a large and obtrusive weapon as a service revolver, must have dumped it at any convenient place in order to make good his escape. I advised the police while submitting my report that they should search for all such likely places, such as ponds, wells, sewers, or bushes in the vicinity of the place of outrage in an attempt to retrieve the discarded weapon. The police followed my advice. There was no pond, sewer, or bush in the neighbourhood, but an old and discarded well was there. With the help of a driver, they combed the bottom of the well and surprisingly enough, a strange looking weapon was recovered, which was brought to me for identification. After removing the mud and the grime from it, the weapon was found to be in good condition and practically free from rust. Apparently it had been dumped into the well very recently and had not time enough to become rusty. I was astonished to find that it was a Colt 0.455 bore service revolver with a most unusual barrel length of 14 inches. Such long barrels are unheard of in revolvers, and the Colt service revolver has a barrel length of seven inches. On careful examination of the barrel, which was peculiar in many respects, a most extra-ordinary feature of it was revealed. It had a Harley-Tunger silencer attached to the barrel by a bayonet joint. When this was detached from the barrel with some difficulty, it was found that it was eight inches long with louvres and holes punctured around it. One end of it had the foresight of a revolver and the other end

the one-inch long bayonet joint, to go over the normal foresight and lock it in position with the barrel, which was found to have

A

B



Figure 1. A : A 0.455 bore Colt service revolver.
B : Forward end of the revolver barrel with a "Harley-Tunger" 'silencer' attached to the muzzle.
(Photographs at about 1/3rd actual size)

the normal barrel length of seven inches. The small arm silencer which is unknown and prohibited in this country, was very popular with the American army during this First World War. I now began to see some light in this perplexing mystery.

The police, under my instructions, combed the entire locality for firearms, both licensed and unlicensed, and collected a large number of shot-guns, rifles, pistols, and revolvers, and majority of which were licensed. In those days ex-army and police officers of the Anglo-Indian community could keep firearms without licence for their own use, and the unlicensed firearms collected by the police belonged to this category. When the police came to Captain Thompson, who was known to have a revolver, he could not produce it and seemed perplexed at its disappearance and said that it must have been stolen during his absence from home. He, however, produced a box of service revolver

cartridges made by Eley-Kynocn which he had had since his army service days in the British army, and from which he was discharged in 1919, after the First World War. He opened the box which should have contained the full complement of 30 cartridges, but now had only 21 left. He was surprised at the disappearance of nine cartridges from the box, as he had not used a single one himself during the long period the weapon was with him as a souvenir of his military service during the First World War. When shown the Colt revolver recovered by the police together with the silencer attachment, he readily recognized them as belonging to him. He produced the empty wooden box with grooves in which the revolver and the silencer fitted perfectly. The police brought the revolver with the silencer and the box of 21 cartridges recovered from captain Thompson and requested me to establish definitely if possible that the revolver and the cartridges were used in the murder.

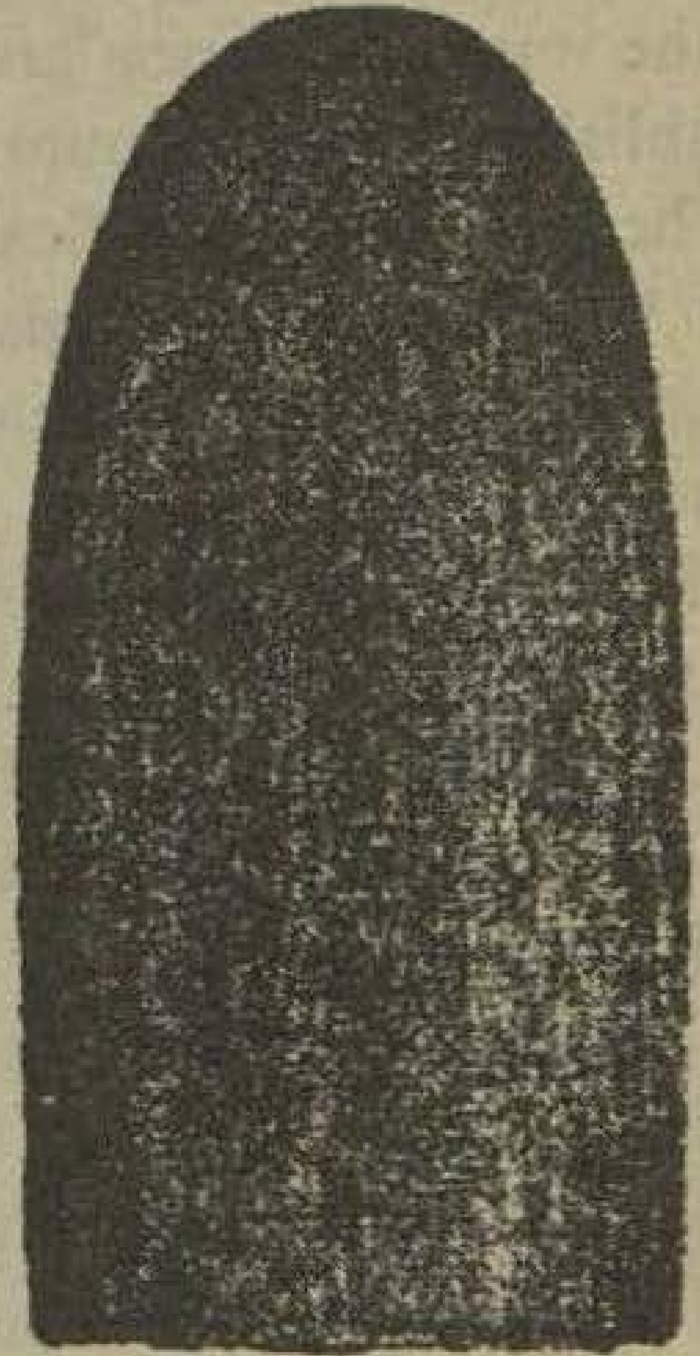


Figure 2. Eley-Kynoch revolver bullet fired from the Colt revolver shown above.
(Photograph enlarged 2.2 diameters)

The cartridges fired from the revolver with the silencer attached produced only a dull thud similar to a vigorous thumping on the concrete floor of a room, whereas without the silencer they produced terrific reports normal with such revolvers. When cartridge was fired without the silencer at a bale of cotton, the penetration of the bullet was about six inches and with the silencer attached the penetration was about four inches only.

A fresh Eley-Kynoch service revolver cartridge fired from the revolver produced a penetration of over four-and-a-half feet by the bullet. The fired bullets from captain Thompson's cartridges were identical in all respects with the bullets extracted from the dead bodies during the post-mortem examination. The identity of the murder weapon and the cartridges used therein were thus established beyond doubt.

The police arrested Susan Thompson on suspicion and produced her before a magistrate for recording her statement. She pleaded complete innocence. She was, however, charged with murder on (i) she was grossly betrayed and seduced by Dr Niranjan, and therefore, she wanted to wreak vengeance on him; (ii) the murder weapon and the cartridges were in her own house for use when required; (iii) on that fateful evening she was seen by Miss Gilani's cook and maidservant, as clad in a black sari with her face completely veiled by the sari, running away from the house towards the gate with a baton-like stick in her hand, which was obviously the revolver with the silencer attached; and (iv) in her dying exclamation at the hospital Miss Gilani uttered the words: "Oh! Soussie, Soussie" before she finally collapsed and died. The word "Soussie" is an endearing form of the female Christian name of "Susan" which Miss Thompson had. Miss Gilani and Miss Thompson being fast friends, it is quite natural for them to call each other by their Christian names, or endearing forms of the same. The magistrate committed Miss Thompson to sessions to stand trial there for the murder of Dr Niranjan and Miss Gilani. The motive for the crime was revenge for the wrongs done to her, and the instrument of murder was the revolver fitted with a silencer belonging to her own father.

In the sessions court, after a protracted trial in which Susan pleaded complete innocence throughout, she was found guilty of the murder of Dr Niranjan and was sentenced to transportation for life. For the murder of Miss Gilani which was found to

be only casual in order to make good her escape, Susan was sentenced to ten-years rigorous imprisonment on a charge of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The two sentences to run concurrently. On appeal to the High Court, however, Susan was given benefit of doubt, and acquitted.

Rural Murderess Finds Novel Killer

IN THE vast expanses of rural India, crimes of a serious nature like murder and homicide take place pretty often, though far less frequently than in urban areas of this great country. By far the largest number of murders that take place in the villages are of a very crude and violent type, using lathis, knives, spears, axes, and other domestic and agricultural implements as weapons, resulting in smashed skulls, broken bones, cut flesh, or incised viscera. These are all committed by men only and women take no part in such activities. Murders committed by women in the villages, although extremely rare, do take place once in a while, and on such occasions, they create a sensation in the country-side, when reported to the police. Such murders are always of a non-violent and subtle type committed by the administration of insidious or virulent poisons in the food, drink, or medicine of the victim. Amongst such lethal substances, metallic poisons like white arsenic, perchloride of mercury, copper sulphate, and lead acetate, and vegetable poisons like opium, seeds of dhatura, juice of nightshade and others are sometimes employed with fatal results. I, as a criminologist, have come across a very interesting case of murder by poisoning with the seed-kernal of yellow oleander or pila kaner as it is known in Hindustani. In this case the young third wife of a sexagenerian Hindu (Brahman) land-lord of a village in Madhya Pradesh administered the poison to her high-tempered and despotic husband in a bid to escape from the terrible attrocities at his hand, which were of daily occur-

rence. With the advice of her paramour, a young *hakim* (Unani medical practitioner) of the village, she administered the poison to her husband in a very novel manner. She fried pakoras in mustard oil in which the yellow oleander seek-kernals had been fried previously. The poison being oil-soluble, it passed from the seek-kernals into the frying oil, and when subsequently pakoras were fried in the latter, the poison passed once again from the oil into the pakoras. In fact the fried pakoras being a highly porous material they retained a large quantity of the poisonous oil by absorption, thereby becoming highly poisonous on this account. The pakoras had a delicious flavour, and when served to the husband were eaten with gusto. The effect of the gastro-intestinal poison soon manifested itself, and the husband died within a few hours with symptoms of cholera. At this time of the year, cholera was actually raging in the countryside in epidemic form, and nobody therefore suspected any foul play in the sudden and unexpected death of the husband. My presence, by sheer chance in a nearby town where I had gone to give evidence in a criminal case in court, led the village police to approach me with a request to investigate the case, about which they had reasons to be suspicious. The result of this investigation led to the apprehension and conviction of the rural murderess and is given in the following pages.

Pande Sarju Prasad had inherited his extensive landed property including agricultural and forest lands as well as several well-settled villages in the Vindhya plateau from his father Pande Raghu Nath, who in his time was one of the biggest landlords or jagirdars of the then Rewa state merged into the Vindhya Pradesh, and now a constituent part of Madhya Pradesh state. In his younger days, Pande Sarju Prasad was a tyrant feared by his numerous tenants no less than the tigers that used to roam wild in the nearby Vindhya mountains in countless numbers. But with years, the tart and ferocious temper of sarju Prasad mellowed and all his angularities rounded,

until by the middle of the current century and at 64 years of age, he was a quiet, little, unassuming fellow, somewhat bent by age and shrivelled by infirmity, who could not even talk loudly to anybody. But his thin piping voice, the embers of his puckered eyes and his vehement gesticulations during speech would indeed belie his senile sobriety and unmistakably point to the volcano within, still perhaps capable of eruption at any time.

Pandeji used to live in his ancestral house in the village of Sanai, which is about 35 miles from Satna—an important railway station in the Vindhya plateau. He had unfortunately no issue, and his two previous wives had already died before him. His third wife Subhadra, whom he had married about ten years earlier, was only about 25 years of age at the time of our episode. The great disparity between their ages and the tremendous gulf existing between their natures and temperaments led to constant friction between husband and wife, and their boisterous quarrels were a big scandal in the otherwise quiet little mountain village. But the flaring up of the quarrel being as sudden and spectacular as its dying down, the people in the neighbourhood became used to it almost as a matter of routine. Pandeji being a great gourmet and Subhadra a fine cook, all dissensions between the pair suddenly collapsed like a pricked bubble, the moment Pandeji felt the urge of the tounge and stomach.

On a bitterly cold January morning, Pandeji went to bathe in the river on account of Mauni Amavas, and when he returned home hungry like a starving wolf, he found his wife still in bed, sleeping like a log. The volcano that was gathering fire during the days past, now suddenly erupted and the verbal lava and domestic conflagration that followed brought the entire neighbourhood to their doorsteps. Calm however was soon restored as Subhadra entered the kitchen.

That very evening Pandeji was taken suddenly ill with severe diarrhoea and vomitting, and so acute was the attack and so debilated was he with age and infirmity, that he could not resist

it. By midnight he was dead, and being a high caste Brahman, his body was cremated before sunrise. As he had no issue, his funeral rites had to be performed by his wife Subhadra.

The sudden and unexpected death of Pande Sarju Prasad, despite his old age and infirmity, came as a great surprise to his somnolent neighbours, and the village gossip went round and gradually gathered in strength that perhaps Pandeji had been done to death. But who could be instrumental in doing so except his young wife who was constantly at loggerheads with the old imbecile and had boisterous quarrels with him every day? How could the couple pull together when their nature and habits were poles apart? Suspicion therefore naturally arose in the minds of neighbours, and the suspicion intensified when the scene of the grave domestic discord on the morning previous to Pandeji's death was recalled. Some of them therefore went and informed the police who came and arrested Subhadra on suspicion. They also searched the entire household for any possible poison which alone could have been administered to Pandeji to cause his death. But nothing of the kind could be found inside the house which was singularly devoid of any sophisticated apparatus or chemicals. Subhadra, in her deposition before the police, said that being a great glutton, Pandeji had eaten the entire lot of pakoras that she had fried for him and of which he was very fond, and as that was too much for him to digest at his age, he fell ill and died. No pakoras were left, but the police got hold of the frying pan and the residual mustard oil in which the pakoras had been fried by Subhadra. But as there were no incriminating evidence against her, she was let off. The cremation of Pandeji had destroyed all possible evidence that was perhaps inside his body at the time of his death.

At that time it so happened that I was at Rewa to give evidence in a forgery case, and I was asked by the police to investigate the mystery of the death of Pande Sarju Prasad. I visited the scene of the occurrence, but there were absolutely no

clues to be had. I, however, brought the mustard oil left over after the frying of the fateful pakoras with me to Delhi.

The oil had a dark brown colour and a peculiar nutty smell, and had tasted bland, with a somewhat bitter aftertaste. Animal experiments proved the oil to be highly toxic, the symptoms of toximia being similar to those of cholera. But no known organic

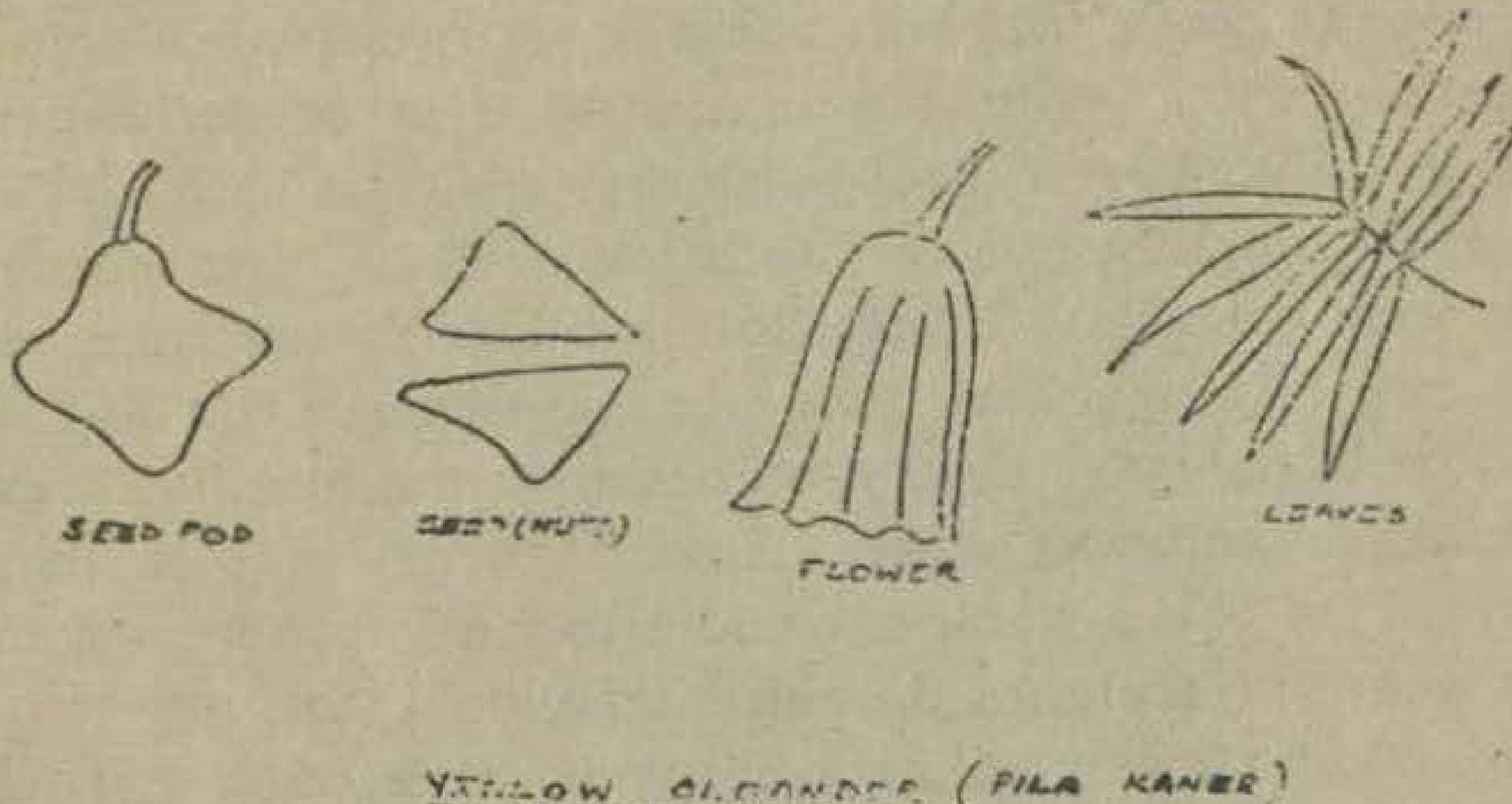


Figure 1. Diagram of the yellow oleander's leaves, flower, seed pod and seeds (nuts)

or inorganic poisons could be detected in the oil, and very few poisons are oil-soluble. The mystery was too baffling for words. I was almost going to give up the game, when the one thing that struck me was the intense blue colour developed by the oil on treatment with concentrated hydrochloric acid. Nearly eighteen years ago, during the course of my chemical researches, I had isolated two very powerful poisons (thevatine and thevatoxine) from the seeds (nuts) of the yellow oleander or "pila kaner" as it is known in Hindustani and thevatia nerifolia in botanical language. It is an ornamental garden plant (shrub) with bright green lanceolate leaves and brilliant yellow bell-shaped flowers. The poisonous matter was contained in the triangular seeds (nuts) inside the kernel, was oil-soluble and

gave indigo-blue colorations with concentrated hydrochloric acid. I wrote to the police to let me know if the yellow oleander plant was available in the neighbourhood of Pandeji's homestead and whether the seeds were present in the plants.



Thevatine × 450



Thevatoxin × 450

Figure 2. Microphotographs of the deadly poisonous active principles of the seed kernels: *Thevatine* and *Thevatoxin* isolated in crystalline form by the present author

I got a prompt reply that the tree was available in plenty there, the entire boundary line of the home being planted with ornamental shrub, which had by then finished its inflorescence and was full of seeds, a collection of which was sent to me. From this I could prepare a mustard oil with the appearance, smell, and taste of the fateful oil left over in Subhadra's kitchen, and it was found to be just as toxic. The solution of the bewildering mystery was now at hand.

When faced with the grim evidence against her, Subhadra

confessed her guilt, but said that she had no intention to kill her husband at all. She wanted him to be invalidated and bedridden, so that she could be saved from the terrible attrocities at his hand. She said that a hakim had told her that if pakoras are made with an oil in which the yellow oleander seed kernels have been fried previously, the pakoras have the power of debilating and invalidating even an elephant. She had tried the experiment on her husband in order to keep him at bay, but with disastrous results.

The law of the land took rather a merciful view of her crime in view of the extenuating circumstances of her case, and she was sentenced to seven-years rigorous imprisonment in the sessions court. On appeal to the High Court this was further reduced to three years. She must have served her sentence already.

Dusky Beauty's Grim Reprisal

WHY DOES a beautiful, intelligent, and gifted woman take to such a terrible crime as murder? What is the causative factor of such violent upheaval in her otherwise gentle and placid character which urges her to such shocking activity, entirely oblivious of the dire consequences that might follow in its wake? Such a grave matter cannot be simply dismissed by saying that she was temporarily insane at the time of the outrage and did not know what she was doing. There is food for thought in tracking the reason for this grim business.

Most beautiful and gifted women are very sensitive to their environments and to what people say about them. Being extremely conscious about their qualities and accomplishments, they cannot stand any adverse criticism from any quarter. Even from their lovers, they always expect praise and eulogy. It is indeed very difficult for such a woman to really fall in love with a man and marry him. Generally speaking, she is too self-centred to love anyone else but herself. But once the amorous instinct is aroused in her, she will do anything for her lover and make herself completely subservient to his slightest wishes and desires. But after such a self-effacing sacrifice if she finds subsequently that she is no longer wanted, and he has gone in quest of "fresh fields and pastures new" in the form of other women, that is, he, after enjoying her, has cast her off as a chattel, she gets into a terrific rage bordering on insanity. There is a well known saying to the effect that hell hath no fury like a woman

scorned. In such a state of mind a woman is quite capable of doing any violent act, regardless of its consequences. A woman betrayed in this way is a dangerous enemy, driven to desperation by the constant thought of her gross betrayal by her lover in whom she had reposed her utmost confidence and for whom she had sacrificed everything. She feels certain that unless his very existence was effaced from the surface of the earth, there could not be any solace for her rankling soul which was in tatters. But once the gruesome murder has been committed, she soon realizes what a terribly attrocious thing she has done for which she will be hounded like a wild animal by the arms of the law and despised by everyone concerned. Her subconscious mind now returned to normalcy, would bemoan the death of her beloved who was no more in this world and without whom her own life seemed utterly untenable. Constantly brooding over the happenings of the past, she gets into a second fit of insanity and commits suicide, although the law had given her the benefit of doubt and exonerated her from all blame. In her own mind she knows perfectly well what she has done and about this she has not the least doubt. In my long experience as a criminologist I have come across several instances of the above type, one of which is narrated here.

One of the most salient aspects of human civilization is undoubtedly the development of the faculty of suppression or sublimation of natural and spontaneous human emotions, which made organized society possible. In a civilized society, the constituents have to exercise considerable control or restraint over their instincts and reflex actions, and have to minister to the sentiments of fellow-beings as a matter of necessity, as otherwise society would come to pieces and the law of the jungle would prevail.

According to Sanskrit philosophers of ancient Hindu culture, the most powerful emotions in human beings in the order of their intensity are: *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed),

Moha (enchantment), *Mada* (infatuation) and *Matsaryja* (indiscretion or insanity). The fountainhead of all these emotions is of course Kama or lust—the prime mover of all animal instincts intended for the preservation of the species. The remaining emotions are only complementary to the fundamental emotion, for example, Krodha is a protest against the encroachment on a man's rights, Lobha is an incentive to acquisition; Moha is an inevitable adjunct to the separation of the sexes, Mada is the culmination point of enchantment, and Matsaryja or insanity (be it temporary or otherwise) is the inevitable concomitant of frustration of one's desires.

Now, what is the basic nature of attraction between human beings of the opposite sex? Why are men attracted towards women and vice versa? In this respect the physical senses of sight and hearing play important parts. Thus men are attracted towards beautiful, pretty, handsome, or comely women, and women are attracted towards men possessing physical vigour, mental alertness, and good or handsome general outlook. In romantic literature this has been euphemistically described as love at first sight. This, however, is only the preliminary stage in the sexual selection for the preservation of the species.

The sense of hearing, at first thought, seems to play hardly any significant role in the above process. But this is often found to be not so on careful consideration, particularly in view of the complex civilization of ours where untold influences seem to play salient roles in the moulding of our lives and intensely shaping its activities. There is scarcely any human being of culture and refinement who is not profoundly influenced by a sweet female voice or enchanted by the melody emanating from a soprano or contralto.

The only question that arises now is which of the two faculties of a man, namely, his sense of sight or hearing, has a stronger influence in determining his attraction towards a woman? Accumulated human knowledge and experience show that in at

least 90 per cent of the cases, the predominating factor seems to be the sense of hearing, as the following true story will tell.

Kumar Hemendra Narain Acharya Choudhury was the eldest son and heir-apparent to the big estate of Maharaja Brojendra Narain Acharya Choudhury of Digha Ghat of the former East Bengal which later became East Pakistan after the partition of 1947, and has now become Bangladesh. This was in the days of the British in India when zamindari on a vast scale was the order of the day, and big zamindars or estate holders, titled rajas, maharajas or nawabs were pampered by the British rulers and encouraged by to lead pompous and profligate lives of supreme indolence. Hereditary titles of rajas, maharajas, and nawabs were conferred on them for pampering their vanity and keeping them away from introspection and in complete isolation from the intelligentsia of the country. They were kept in a blissful ignorance of the fact that they were mere vassals of the designing British to keep the masses of the Indian people in perpetual poverty and bondage.

Hemendra was a tall, fair, exceedingly handsome young man of about twenty-five, reading in the second year B.A. Pass class of Presidency College, Calcutta. It might be surprising that at the age of 25 he was reading in the second year B.A. Pass course which an average student does at the age of nineteen or twenty. But the fact is that Hemendra had been in the same class for the rest four years. Every year when the time of the B.A. examination came, he invariably skipped it on some pretext or other. One year his percentage of attendance fell short, another year he had to go home owing to the alleged illness of one of his near relatives, and still another year he had to go out of India on tour. Every year he avoided appearing at the examination. An ordinary student would have been turned out of the college for such default, but the British principal of the college allowed him to continue in the same class year after year as he was the son of a maharaja and also because he was good at sports. He

was the captain of the cricket team of college.

Hemendra was living in Calcutta in a fine suburban villa belonging to the zamindari estate of his father. It was a spacious two-storeyed bungalow with lawn, flower, fruit, and kitchen gardens, servant's quarters and a garage. Hemendra was a bachelor (most unusual for a zamindar's son of his age) and was living alone in the house with a full complement of servants —cook, chowkidar, gatekeeper, and a driver for his Minerva saloon. He was in fact living in grand style quite befitting a prince which in fact he was. But because of his extraordinary virtue of great interest in sports, he had not so far imbibed the vices of his forefathers and of the princely order in general in India, namely, that of addiction to women and wine.

Hemendra had a telephone in his house. It was in the early days of the telephone system in India, before the advent of the automatic telephone, when the exchange had to be called by the subscriber for getting a certain code word and a number. One fine morning Hemendra was trying to put through a call to his college. He lifted the receiver from the hook of the stand of the mouthpiece, and putting it to his ear, shouted, "Hello Miss, Hello Miss, will you please give me 'College' 423?" From the other end came the reply in a sweet soprano: "Yes Sir, sorry, the number you ask for is engaged at the moment. Will you please call again after three minutes?" Hemendra hung the receiver on the hook and waited. He was so pleasantly surprised by the enchanting melody of the voice of the telephone girl that he felt eager to call her again, and three minutes seemed to him like eternity. However, at the end of the stipulated period, he called again, but this time he said: "Are you the Miss who asked me to wait for three minutes for getting 'College 423'?" Out came the reply in the same silver şoprano: "Yes Sir, but unfortunately the number is still engaged. I am afraid you will have to wait for some more time."

"That does not matter. I shall wait as long as you may ask

me to so. But in the meantime may I ask what is your name?"

"My name is Molina Sarkar."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one Sir. Your number is now free. May I put it through?"

"Yes, you may please do so, but I would like to talk to you again. When can I do so? I am Kumar Hemendra Narain Acharya Choudhury, the eldest son of the Maharaja of Digha Ghat. I am now reading in the Presidency College and living in my own house. I am 25 and a bachelor. I am. . .," but before he could finish, the telephone girl had already put the call through and from the other end of the line a gruff male voice was saying: "Hellow, this is College 423, the office of the Presidency College. Whom do you want please?" Hemendra was no longer interested in the college number, and so he quietly hung up the receiver without uttering a word. Next morning, and thereafter for several mornings in succession, Hemendra was at the telephone, talking to Molina, interrupted by her frequent attention to her duty. From all these talks he came to learn that Molina was the daughter of a *kaviraj* (Ayurvedic physician) of Dacca. She had passed the matriculation examination, but for financial difficulties could not continue her studies any further, and had to seek employment. She had to come to Calcutta for this purpose, leaving her family—parents, six brothers, and two sisters—at Dacca, she being the eldest of the family. She got the present job of a telephone operator about two years before. She was also a good singer, and was supplementing her income by working as a background singer in a local theatre on a part-time basis. Her great aim in life was to become a radio artiste.

Molina further said that she was living in a working girl's hostel, but she declined to give him her address. When pressed for accepting an invitation from Hemendra, she said that she would meet him at the corner of the Light House Cinema at 6 P.M. in the evening in case he cared to meet her. Hemendra

readily accepted the proposal and was at the Light House Cinema at quarter to six. He waited for nearly half an hour, but there was no young lady forthcoming. He was sorely disappointed and was on the point of leaving the place, when suddenly a young lady in that well known soprano voice accosted him. "Excuse me, but are you Mr. Hemendra?" On his replying in the affirmative, she said: "I am Molina. I am very sorry for being so late, but you will appreciate that I had to come by Tram and was delayed on the way due to heavy traffic. I hope you will not mind."

Hemendra and Molina went to Firpos and had a light dinner. Thereafter, they saw a film show at the Light House which ended at about 10-30 P.M. Since it was already late in the evening, Hemendra insisted on taking her to her hostel in his car, and this Molina could not refuse. Thereafter, Hemendra reached his own residence at about midnight.

After having discovered Molina's residence, Hemendra's car would often be seen in the evening, waiting outside to take Molina out, and also late in the evening to drop her there after a rendezvous. On all such occasions she had taken her dinner with him.

Molina was a dark statuesque girl of average height, with large dark gleaming eyes and luxuriant curly black hair. She had the chiselled features and figure of a Hindu goddess carved out of solid granite by the ancient sculptors of India, specimens of which are found in and around the temples of Konarak, Khajuraho, and Chidambaram. She had a smooth glossy complexion of the colour of dark mehogany (her own name "Molina" meant in Bengali a dusky complexion), delicately arched eyebrows and long curved eyelashes, chiselled nose and lips, with billowing hair behind her chubby face. Because of her statuesque figure and stately gait and deportment, she was variously known amongst her circle of friends and admirers as "Kasti Devi" (granite goddess), "Abu Rani" (ebony queen) and "Krishna

Bhamini" (black enchantress). She was in fact a rare specimen of dusky beauty, which unfortunately in Bengal as also in other parts of India, is at a discount in the marriage market, since a dark complexion is usually regarded as synonymous with ugliness. However, with pastel-hued sari tastefully draped around her sharply contoured frame that would accentuate her feminity, she had an extraordinarily attractive personality. Even more so was her silvery voice which in her ordinary talk or rythmic laughter would seem to her audiences like a sweet melody come from afar. Despite all the extraordinary features, Molina had not so far received any proposal of marriage from any quarter, and she had no male friend either. Her parents were too poor to contemplate marriage for her. Hemendra was the first man to talk to her nicely and in a friendly manner.

Through the influences of Hemendra with certain high officials of All India Radio, Molina was able to get in, first as a part-time and finally as a full-time artiste after resigning her previous job as telephone operator. She was singing Ravindra Sangeet in the beginning, but before long she was singing classical music in Bengali, Hindi, and Oriya. Her talents in this direction was so great that she very soon learnt Carnatic music and became an expert.

The entire episode, from the date of her first meeting Hemendra to the time when she became a full-fledged radio artiste, took only six months during which she frequently met Hemendra and went out with him for dinners and cinema shows. Often Hemendra would insist on her coming to his house which she consistently refused, saying that for an unmarried working girl like her, it was not proper to do so unless she was married to him. He promised to marry her after his B.A. examination, in another three months' time. Molina felt overjoyed at the prospect of her marriage, but continued to maintain a discreet resistence to the advances of Hemendra for excessive intimacy.

April came and Hemendra's examination was soon over.

Hemendra presented Molina with a jewelled set consisting of a gold necklace, a pair of ear-rings and a ring, all set with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and other precious stones. This he said was the token of his promise of marriage to her in another three months' time, that is in the following June. In the meantime, he said he had already written to his parents for a formal sanction for the marriage.

Molina thereafter began to come to Hemendra's house and remain there for long periods. In the house Hemendra introduced Molina to his servants and subordinates as his fiance whom he would be marrying soon. She therefore felt that there could not be any objection to her visiting him at his house during the evenings. She was eagerly counting the days whereafter the happy event would take place.

In the radio station, Molina made acquaintance with another young newcomer, Mridula Mukherjee, appointed as an announcer. She was also from East Bengal (Dacca) and appeared to be of the same age as Molina. Molina and Mridula both hailing from East Bengal, speaking the same dialect, students of the same educational institute and engaged in the same vocation, soon became very friendly and they passed their off-time together. Molina secured Mridula's accommodation in the same women's hostel, so that they were close together most of the time.

Mridula was a tall, fair, vivacious girl of about twenty-four, with a very pretty face and fine figure. Her large eyes with the dark pupils wallowing in ponds of white conjunctiva and arched over with delicately poised eyebrows and lashed over with long curved eyelashes, seemed wistfully to glance from side to side and get submerged in a fathomless abyss. Mridula seemed to stun any young man with a single glance from these large windows of the soul. Her glossy black shoulder-length curls rippling about her crescent forehead and her baby-like face made her a charming visage. Compared to Molina, her figure was on the slim side, without any pronounced heavy contour

anywhere. Also, Mridula's voice was completely devoid of the charm of a silver soprano, was of a lower pitch, heavier timber, and greater amplitude and clarity. It was perfectly suited to her job as an announcer on radio, and had the business-like quality of her profession although remaining pleasantly feminine.

One afternoon, when Hemendra went to see Molina at the radio station during her off-time, she introduced Mridula to him as her friend and colleague at the broadcasting station. Hemendra seemed to have been very much impressed by the chic appearance of Mridula and by a stunning glance from her large lustrous eyes. He was still talking to Mridula, when Molina left as it was time for her to assume duty.

Thereafter, Hemendra switched over his time and attention to Mridula, and gradually began to neglect Molina. Molina noticed this to her dismay, as Hemendra's car was very often at the gate of the women's hostel in the evenings to pick Mridula up, specially on those days when Molina was on duty at the broadcasting station. One evening at about 9-30 P.M. it so happened that Molina had just returned from the radio station when Hemendra's car turned up at the gate to deposit Mridula at the end of her rendezvous with Hemendra. The latter got down from the car to escort Mridula to the gate of the women's hostel, when he was suddenly taken aback by Molina staring at him in amazement. Hemendra tried to open a conversation with her, but she refused this with contempt, and casting a firey glance at him, quickly left the scene without uttering a word. Even her friend Mridula could not persuade her to stay to exchange a friendly greeting with Hemendra.

Thereafter, Hemendra tried his best to placate and pacify Molina, but in vain. The volcano that was gathering fire during the days past now burst into violent eruption, and none of the wiles of Hemendra to subdue its engulfing fury were of any avail. He tried many times to meet Molina at the broadcasting station during her off-time, but she persistently refused to meet

him. He tried to meet her in the visitors' room of the women's hostel during her off-duty period, but she declined with disdain all his requests for this purpose. Hemendra's ardouous passion for Molina and conquering her newly-acquired hatred for him, became overpowering and was consuming his soul. Hemendra was entirely unacquainted with the fury of a woman scorned, as due to his heritage, wealth and appearance, he had always smooth sailing with all women he wanted to win, so far. He had yet to know that, and learnt too late.

Six months had already passed since the memorable episode, but Hemendra failed in all his frantic efforts to meet Molina. The hot dry summer had relaxed into the deluge of the rainy season followed by the mellowness of the autumn with an atmosphere of festivities going on all around. Imperceptibly, the north wind had begun to blow and it was already winter. One January evening, when it was bitterly cold outside and a dense fog had enveloped the atmosphere, Hemendra's car appeared at the emergency ward of the medical college hospital. Inside the car, Hemendra was found in a semi-conscious condition, complaining of severe pain in his left upper arm and of breathing difficulty. He was admitted to the hospital, where his ailment was found to be a minute wound on his left upper arm, as if due to the prick of a needle. There was only a small clot of blood at the site of the wound, but otherwise there was no trace of any injury in any part of the body. Being in a semi-conscious state, Hemendra could not give any coherent account of what had happened to him. But he complained of severe pain all over the body, and his breathing was very heavy and difficult. Strichnine was injected to improve his respiration, but it proved to be of no avail. Complete respiratory paralysis occurred at about 2 A.M., and in another ten minutes Hemendra was dead.

Hemendra's sudden death under such mysterious circumstances necessitated a post-mortem examination. The examination thus conducted revealed that his death was due to

respiratory paralysis on account of poisoning of the circulatory system by some virulent blood poison injected into the blood-stream. The alimentary canal from the esophagus to the rectum was in a normal condition. There was no wound on his body except that on the left upper arm, which was indeed so minute that it could scarcely be detected by the naked eye. The puncture was like that of a needle with a tiny laceration on one side It could have been caused by a needle. The investigation of the cause of Hemendra's death was taken up by the CID.

The police came to learn on interrogation of Hemendra's driver that on that fateful evening, Hemendra's car had brought him to the women's hostel where he had alighted and proceeded directly to Molina's apartment, ignoring the restrictions imposed on male visitors in this connection. He was there for nearly fifteen minutes, at the end of which he came back in a dazed condition and staggered into his car complaining of severe pain in his body.

The police thereafter went to the women's hostel and interrogated Molina. In the course of her long statement before the police, she said that Hemendra had been her friend for a long time and had indeed made a promise of marrying her last summer. As a token of his promise he had given her a jewelled set of gold necklace, a pair of earrings, and a ring, all set with precious stones, and she produced them before the police. Hemendra wanted to have intimate relations with her even before marriage, which she consistently resisted. In the meantime, Hemendra had become very friendly with another working girl, Mridula, of the AIR, and started to neglect Molina. From a very reliable source Molina came to learn that Hemendra had become very intimate with Mridula and also had promised to marry her. Late one evening Molina actually saw Hemendra dropping Mridula at the gate of the women's hostel from his car, after their apparent rendezvous at Hemendra's residence. This enraged Molina so much that she became determined to

cut off all connections, with Hemendra. Molina was, however, taken by surprise the following evening when she found Hemendra in the visitors' room of the women's hostel, waiting for her. She curtly told him to leave the place and not come again. He went away, but time and again he did the same thing. At last, on a severe reprimand from the hostel superintendent; he stopped coming there, and did not appear for several months.

A few days previously, however, Hemendra again appeared at the women's hostel, and ignoring all restrictions, went straight to Molina's room. She was just going out when he came. She asked him to leave the women's hostel immediately as otherwise she would be compelled to call the police. At this Hemendra quietly departed.

Next evening she was sitting on her bed and knitting when Hemendra quietly opened the door and closed it again behind him. He rushed towards her and taking her in his arms threw her down on the bed in an attempt to violate her. She resisted but finding herself quite unequal to the task, she gave him a thrust with the knitting needle that she had in her hand, on his left upper arm. He jumped up in agony, and opening the door, ran his waiting car. After that incident she had known nothing

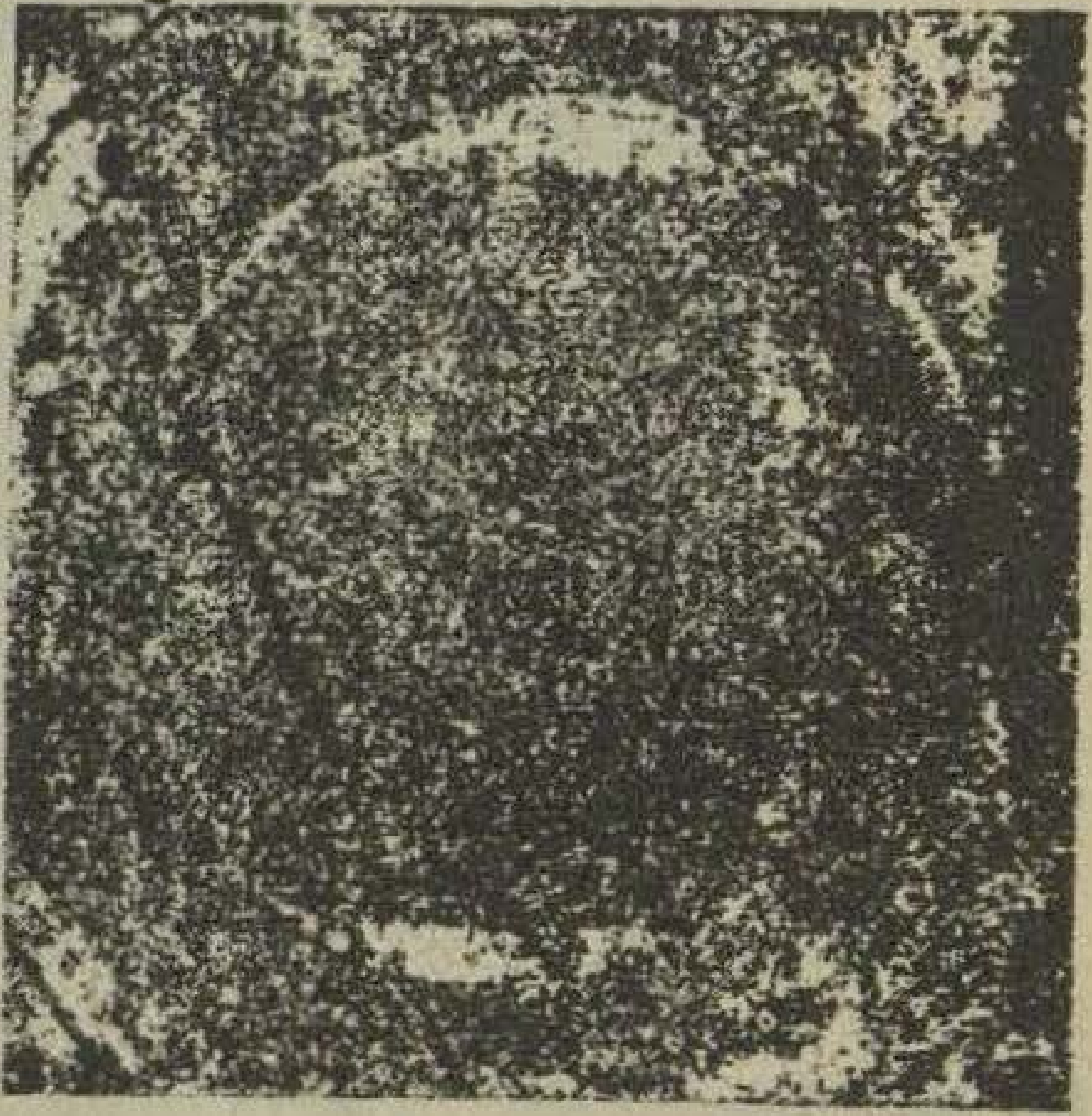


Figure 1. The deadly arrow poison or curare, shown here as an extremely viscous, transluscent brown liquid, on a watch glass

more about Hemendra until the police had come to her.

The police then went to Mridula in the same women's hostel and interrogated her. She said that she had known Hemendra for over six months, and she had been introduced to him by Molina, taken her out on many her friend and colleague in the AIR. From the very beginning Hemendra had evinced great interest in her and had occasions to restaurants and cinema shows and long drives in his car. About three months ago he had signified his intention of marrying her by presenting her with a gold jewelled set consisting of a necklace, a pair of ear-rings, and a ring, all set with precious stones, as a token of his promise of marriage to her. After this he often invited her to



Figure 2. The barbed crochet needle with the tabular barb protection case

his residence, where she spent long evenings with him enjoying his company. She admitted having intimate relations with him, as being his fiance, she saw no objection to this, particularly as Hemendra was the son of a maharaja and heir-apparent to his great estate and enjoyed immense social prestige. But for reasons unknown to her, for the last one month or so, Hemendra

had completely deserted her. She had absolutely no knowledge of what had happened to him until the police came to her.

The police took possession of the knitting needle, its thin protective tubular case, and the cardigan Molina alleged she had been knitting with it. These were submitted by the police to me for investigation. The photograph of the knitting needle and its protective tubular case for the protection of its fine barbed end is reproduced on pages 105 and 106. The needle was made of nickelplated steel, and was about seven inches long by about 1/8 inch in diameter below the flattened, oblong (diamond shaped) middle and tapered to a fine end (1/32") with a tiny barb at the terminal. The needle was quite unsuitable for knitting wool, and it was absurb to think that Molina was knitting the woollen cardigan with it. The needle was in fact a crochet needle intended for knitting fine lace with fine cotton, mercerized cotton, or silk thread. The needle was somewhat rusty and apparently had not been used for a long time. The barb had a speck of a black sticky substance attached to it below the triangular apex. Similar material was also found in the thin tubular cover of the barbed portion of the needle. This seemed to be an interesting revelation. The quantity of material for examination was, however, extremely minute. It was therefore subjected to examination by chemical microscopy.

Preliminary examination revealed that the black sticky substance was partly soluble in dilute hydrochloric acid and completely soluble in alcohol. Alkaloid reagent like Mandelin's, Frode's and Dragendorf's produced distinct colour reactions (blue, purple, and crimson respectively) indicating the presence of an alkaloid in it. Concentrated nitric acid gave rise to a carminered coloration. Similar colorations were obtained in the same way from an authentic sample of *curare* (arrow poison) obtained from the Andaman Islands. It was also confirmed that the black substance was haemolytic (blood coagulating) in character. And Hemendra's death, according to the post-mortem

report, had been caused by a haemolytic poison injected into the blood straight, which brought about respiratory paralysis due to circulatory failure. This was the substance of the report submitted by me to the police as the result of my investigation.

Molina was thereafter arrested by the police on suspicion. She, however, did not detract an inch from her previous statement made before the police. It was pointed out to her that the needle in question was an old, rusty, crochet needle, and it was quite impossible for her to have knitted the woollen cardigan with it. The needle cover had a virulent poison in it which she must have purposely put there for killing Hemendra with whom she had fallen out. This material was the extremely poisonous blood coagulant curare (arrow poison) which was available in Calcutta, and which she must have procured with murderous intent. But Molina was adamant. She was sent up for trial for murdering Hemendra with a poisoned crochet needle, and was ultimately committed to sessions.

The sessions judge, however, found the evidence against Molina not sufficiently weighty to convict her under Section 302 IPC (murder) and consequently gave her the benefit of doubt and acquitted her. An appeal to the High Court against the acquittal by the state government was rejected. Molina was exonerated of all blame and set free.

The mystery of the case, however, deepened, when only a few days after the acquittal, Molina committed suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills. She had left a note written in her own hand in Bengali which said: "I cannot stand this life any more without my Hemendra whom I have cruelly killed. I am therefore putting an end to my miserable existence and save me from the intense agony that is overwhelming me. No one need be sorry for me. None should shed any tears on my account. The grievous sin that I have committed deserves no compassion." Sd. "Luckless Molina."

Enchanting Murderess in Eternal Triangle

THIS IS the strange case of a beautiful young schoolteacher, Kuldeep, who turned out to be a violent murderess under extraordinary circumstances. She had developed a laision with a supervisory employee of the All India Radio, Jeevan Lal, in the capital. Both were Punjabis, and they lived close to each other. Outside school and office hours, they used to meet frequently, visiting cinemas. restaurants, and places of entertainment together, and it is also on record that they were occasionally out for the whole night. Kuldeep was living as a paying guest in a family who never cared to take any notice of her movements, and Jeevan Lal had frequent night duties also at the radio station. So there was nothing to prevent them from going out together whenever they wanted to. This kind of amorous escapades went on for two years, but never once was there any proposal for marriage from either side. How long this kind of freelance love-making would have continued is very difficult to guess, but at this stage something most unusual happened which completely changed the picture.

It was the advent of a pretty young Bengali artiste, Sujata, at the radio station. Sujata was dark though remarkably good-looking, but her greatest qualification was her wonderful voice, which in all her Bengali, Hindustani, and Carnatac music broadcasts from All India Radio would captivate her listeners over the subcontinent. Jeevan Lal was charmed beyond measure and enthralled by her soul-stirring music when listened to it one

evening he on his own radio. Next day he made acquaintance with Sujata, which in the course of a few months developed into love between the two. Before long, Jeevan Lal proposed marriage, and was accepted by Sujata. In the meantime, the former daily meetings between Jeevan Lal and Kuldeep became less frequent, and at the end of about three months, ceased altogether. But during the period he was having his amorous parleys with both women, Jeevan Lal never once let on to the one the existence of the other. This was a most dangerous step which he had undertaken, for before long his real intentions were discovered by Kuldeep, who immediately broke off with him, and began to plan a reprisal for his infidelity. The eternal triangle, now began working its ruthless process of attribution for the elimination of one or more of the contestants. The climax came soon after Sujata was married to Jeevan Lal, and a most gruesome murder took place in its wake. How this astonishing event took place is narrated here.

Can a beautiful woman who casts a fascinating radiance around her by her bewitching charms and captivates everyone she comes across by her winsome demeanour turn out to be a violent murderess? To this perplexing question, the most likely answer from most readers of this book, particularly the fair sex, will be: "Certainly not" or "Never." But truth is sometimes stranger than fiction and the facts of life occasionally run counter to precepts. The following true story is an illustration in point.

Jeevan Lal Kapoor was an office superintendent in All India Radio's head office in Parliament Street in New Delhi. He had obtained the post through a competitive examination soon after graduation from the university. His work consisted mainly in keeping records of radio artistes that came to Akashvani Bhawan daily; of their special requirements in the form of musical instruments and other accompaniments; and of their performances and emoluments. The radio broadcasting and monitoring ser-

vices being open all 24 hours, Jeevan Lal used to have duties during day or night by rotation.

Jeevan Lal was a tall, exceedingly fair, and handsome young man of clean-cut features so characteristic of a Punjabi. He had light-brown eyes, chestnut hair, and a wheatish complexion, and in these respects he could often be mistaken for a Spaniard, Italian, Greek, or an Armanian. Though his native tongue was Punjabi, he could speak Hindi, Bengali, and English quite fluently, the last two with somewhat of a slurring accent, commonly found amongst Punjabis and Madrasis. No one in the office, however, had ever heard him speaking in his mother tongue.

Jeevan Lal had his parental house in Kiron Bagh, a suburb of Delhi, where he lived with his widowed mother and younger sister Bibha reading in a local women's college. Bibha being very popular in both school and college, where she received her education, many of her friends used to come to her house and spend much time with her. Her mother used to encourage this as otherwise Bibha felt very lonely in the house with Jeevan Lal away on duty and nobody for her to talk to.

Amongst Bibha's friends that used to come one Kuldeep Kaur, a very pretty girl who was with Bibha in school, but who, after her higher secondary examination, had qualified herself as a physical instructress, and was now employed in a local girls' school. She was Bibha's closest friend, and being also a neighbour, she was very often to be seen in the Bibha's house. Bibha's mother also liked Kuldeep enormously, as she was an exceedingly pretty girl very nice and well-behaved, and in her opinion would make a fine match for Jeevan Lal, whom she wanted to get married soon, particularly as he was now an earning member.

Kuldeep was a tall, fair, vivacious girl, with the sharp, chiselled features of the heavenly courtesan Menaka of Hindu mythology as depicted in the world-famous painting by Ravi Varma.

Straggling strands of her billowing bobbed hair rippling about her charming face would be like bees hovering about a newly-opened lotus bud. Her gleaming eyes and long eyelashes emanated a molten glare like a crystal lagoon lashed over by quivering palm fronds. Her figure was like that of *Venus de Medici*, poignant and yet delicate, sinuous and yet firm like sponge rubber. It is indeed very rare to come across such an extraordinary beauty like Kuldeep, even amongst Punjabi girls well known throughout India for their physical charm. But with such devastating loveliness, what prevented her from getting a lover and a husband? Her class-fellows with far less bodily equipment were glamorously walking about with their boy friends or getting married in quick succession. But why not Kuldeep? Could it be her aggressive beauty and stunning charms kept them away? What else could it be? That seemed to be a ticklish question rising in the mind of everybody.

Jeevan Lal's mother had told him that in Kuldeep she had found an ideal prospective daughter-in-law, and she would indeed be happy if he treated her with love and affection that a future wife would expect from him. Jeevan Lal in the beginning, although somewhat cold towards Kuldeep, warmed up considerably in her company, and in about six months was almost daily taking her out and returning late at night. Sometimes they remained away for the whole night and returned the following morning. People in the neighbourhood began to talk, but the pair cared a hoot for all these as they thought their marriage was certain, in fact almost imminent, although neither had broached the subject.

In the studio of broadcasting house there used to come very often a young Bengali radio artiste of the name of Sujata Chatterjee, with a golden voice, and her Ravindra Sangeet and classical songs were immensely popular with the listening public. Her rich contralto with a silvery cadence, seemed to flow out from the depth of her soul and bathe her audience in heavenly

delight. The rhythm and timbre of her glorious voice had soul-stirring and elevating qualities. But physically she was a shy and demure little woman, rather short and dark, like most Bengali girls, with long black hair, and large dark eyes. Her figure and the lustre of her olive skin likened her to a Hindu goddess carved out of solid granite by the ancient sculptors of Konarak and Khajuraho. She had hardly any physical charms that could attract a modern, sophisticated young man but the beauty of her soul enshrined in her captivating voice could enthral countless thousands of radio listeners. Sujata, in fact, lived in the minds of men solely because of the exquisite fascinations of her glorious voice.

Jeevan Lal had seen Sujata coming and going from broadcasting house and had also kept record of her activities therein as a matter of routine. But he never took any real notice of her as she was, like hundreds of other artistes, frequenting the studio on business. But one day he listened to her music on the radio at home and was so charmed with it that he made it a point to see her in the studio next day. She spoke to him nicely and courteously, and he was so captivated with her soft-spoken musical voice, her dark, chiselled features, and the speechless lovelore pouring out from the depth of her large dark eyes, that he at once asked her if he could take her out for a cinema show in the evening. Sujata also seemed to have been attracted by this very fair and handsome young man and she had not the heart to refuse. They went to the cinema and after the show was over, took their dinner together in a posh restaurant before leaving for their respective homes.

It is a physical law of nature that opposites attract each other—tall boys and short girls, fair men and dark women, cold calculating males and reckless and impulsive females, stolid husbands and nagging wives, and so on. Probably following the same natural principle, fair and handsome Jeevan Lal, who had never cared for music in his life, felt inordinately attracted to-

wards this olive-brown and statuesque Sujata pouring forth captivating rhythm and melody in her songs and speech. Sujata apparently felt likewise, for the two soon began to meet frequently and spend long hours in each other's company. One Sunday, Jeevan Lal invited Sujata to his house for lunch, specially with the object of showing her to his mother and getting her approval for coming to an important decision which had been agitating his mind for some time. He had to make up his mind once and for all whether he wanted Sujata or Kuldeep as a life partner and companion. He was on the horns of a dilemma, indeed at the apex of an eternal triangle with two women at the base tugging him in different directions. He was attracted to both for different reasons, but in this age he could not have both for wives for obvious reasons. Kuldeep was an ideal companion for all the physical pleasures of life. But just as men do not live by bread alone, so food for the soul was just as essential to lead a rich and full life. Only Sujata was fitted to fulfil these requirements on the mental plain. Jeevan Lal, by his indecision and vascillation, was being tossed between the devil and the deep sea, with the inherent incapacity of fending off the one or fording the other.

As ill-luck would have it, when on the appointed Sunday Sujata came to his house for lunch, Kuldeep also happened to come. Kuldeep's eyes blazed on seeing Sujata in the house, and although Jeevan Lal tried to explain away her presence by saying that she was his colleague in office and was a well-known singer whom he wanted to introduce to his family, it was of no avail. The volcano that was gathering fire inside her during the months past by his lukewarm ardour and dubious conduct, now burst violently, and despite earnest entreaties of both Bibha and Jeevan Lal Kuldeep went out in a defiant gesture.

After that memorable happening, Jeevan Lal did not see Kuldeep again for over six months as she had stopped coming to his house. The latter, however, seemed hardly to miss Kuldeep

much as he was already drinking deep in the fountain of love and wallowing in the soothing balm of Sujata's heavenly melody. During these six months the amorous escapades of Jeevan Lal and Sujata went on smoothly and advanced so well that at the end of the period an announcement appeared in the papers about the engagement of the pair and their impending marriage according to the Civil Marriages Act.

Next day, Jeevan Lal had the surprise of his life when he found Kuldeep waiting for him at his office. After the exchange of pleasantries, she came to the point and told him firmly that he must break off his engagement with Sujata. That black witch had only an insubstantial voice and nothing else, whereas Kuldeep was best suited and gifted to afford him all the pleasures of married life and make for him a happy home and family. He had already had some experience of what she was capable in this connection. She was now willing and ready to be his life companion. Jeevan Lal realized that Kuldeep was being tossed and lacerated by the storm of overwhelming emotions of feminine jealousy. He tenderly explained to her that he had always a soft corner for her whom he loved with all the ardour of his youth and vitality, but during the years he had been going about with her, she had never once spoken of marriage. Otherwise he would never have proposed to Sujata. But having gone so far, how could he now retrace his steps and tell Sujata that she was no longer wanted by him? That was impossible, and marry her he must. However, Kuldeep would always remain the queen of his heart and his most beloved friend through life. From the stolid expression on her face it did not become clear, however, whether she took Jeevan Lal seriously, or cared to understand what he was driving at. She quietly took leave of him and at Jeevan Lal's importunities promised to see him again soon.

One day, before the date fixed for Jeevan Lal's marriage, Kuldeep again appeared in his office. She requested him to ask

his clerk to go away and close the door after him as she had some very important matter to tell him in private. Jeevan Lal, although exceedingly surprised by her behaviour, acceded to her request and when they were alone she repeated to him what she had told on the previous occasion and almost ordered him to break off his impending marriage to Sujata. Jeevan Lal, with faltering voice and tearful eyes, implored her to consider that such a step at this stage was quite out of question, as that would engulf both the parties in utter social indignity, and this may even have serious repercussions on their jobs in broadcasting house. He assured her of his unflinching love and affection for her and said that he would remain her most sincere friend and lover for life. Kuldeep was apparently unmoved by all Jeevan Lal said. She quietly opened her large vanity bag and took out a dagger with a bright red plastic handle, encased in a blue velvet sheath. A dexterous pull, and out came a gleaming six-inch blade with a pointed end. She held it out before the surprised eyes of Jeevan Lal and menacingly said that if he married Sujata, this knife would bring them to their ignoble end. And before Jeevan Lal could get over his utter amazement and gasp out anything in reply, Kuldeep quietly put the dagger back in the sheath, closed her bag, and without saying a word, silently opened the door and departed.

Jeevan Lal's marriage took place as scheduled, and his house on that memorable night took up a festive look. Everything was on a set pattern so favourite with the Punjabis. Next day his friends and colleagues in broadcasting house gave a grand reception to the newly-married couple in their honour. Jeevan Lal and Sujata were now husband and wife, and to all appearances a very loving and devoted pair. Except for a couple of days' absence on leave, their marriage did not disturb their regular routine in the office and the studio.

Nearly six months had elapsed since Jeevan Lal's marriage. Sujata had installed herself as a very affectionate and devoted

wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law in his house. She had already learned some Punjabi to talk to her mother-in-law who knew no other language. Bibha became so attached to her that she was almost like a handmaid to her and followed her like a shadow. Even Jeevan Lal gave up going to his club and would spend his evenings at home with his wife and family. Occasionally, Jeevan Lal would go to a cinema in the evening with Sujata, otherwise he would enjoy her glorious music with the family. Jeevan Lal had domestic bliss and happiness as never before, and this became apparent by his appearance and cheerful disposition.

One evening in early November, Sujata and Jeevan Lal were waiting at a bus-stand for a bus. The stand was opposite a school with a compound enclosed with barbed wire. A slum area was close by, and from the shacks and shanties the suffocating smoke of burning cowdung cake lose in clouds, filling the atmosphere with a stifling blue haze. A solitary electric bulb on a pole dimly lit the area, casting a shroud of unreality all about. Suddenly, there was a terrific commotion amongst the by-standers, and the shrill cry of a woman in severe agony rang out from amongst them, rending the still air. A tall, hefty woman in a blue sari with her face veiled had darted out from nowhere with a flashing dagger in her hand, and in the twinkling of an eye, had planted the same in the bare left midriff of Sujata standing by the side of her husband. She took out the dripping instrument with a jerk, threw it out to a distance with a mighty sweep of her arm and disappeared through the barbed wire enclosed compound of the school. All this happened so quickly that none of the bystanders, not even Jeevan Lal by the side of Sujata, had a clear glimpse of her face. They all became engrossed with Sujata who was bleeding profusely and sinking rapidly from the deeply incised dagger wound in the region of her heart. Police soon arrived on the spot, and they removed Sujata, who had become unconscious by that time, to the hospital for emergency treatment. The

police also searched for and recovered the blood-stained dagger thrown by the assassin. On careful examination of the barbed-wire fence and the enclosed compound through which the murderess had left, they found a few thin strands of blue cloth apparently torn out from her sari by the barbs. They were slightly stained with blood from her person owing to the cuts inflicted by the sharp barbs which were themselves so stained. A few broken pieces of blue-glass bangles were found close by which were taken possession of by the police. There was, however, no trace of the assasin and nobody could say where from she had come and where she had disappeared like magic.

Sujata died in hospital soon after admission without regaining consciousness and her dying declaration could not be recorded. Post-mortem examination revealed that the fatal wound was caused by a vigorous knife thrust immediately below her left breast and in the direction of the heart. The instrument had cut through the left lung and the pericardium and had penetrated the left ventricle, opening an inch-long slit. The instrument of murder was a double-edged and pointed dagger, about six inches in length and one inch wide with the taper beginning from about an inch-and-a-half from the tip. The dagger recovered by the police corresponded exactly to such description, and there was absolutely no doubt that this must be the instrument with which the gruesome murder had been committed.

Next day, when the police went to the house of Kuldeep to arrest her on suspicion and information supplied to them by Jeevan Lal, she was nowhere to be found in Delhi, and none of her relatives could say where she had gone. This was most surprising no doubt, but her disappearance was only shortlived. The police had flashed out wireless messages of her description to all the neighbouring districts and within two days she was arrested in Ludhiana and brought to Delhi. Her alibi was fruitless, as on the day of the murder she was known to have attended school till 5 P.M., while the murder actually took

place at about 6 P.M. There was no known means of locomotion by which she could have gone to Ludhiana within one hour from Delhi. Besides, on searching her premises, a blue sari with several thin strands torn away from it, apparently by



Figure 1. Micro-photograph of fibres of bits of blue sari left by the assailant on barbed wire, in polarized light. × 450

barbed wire, was recovered by the police, and they also recovered several thin blue glass bangles, very similar in colour and texture to the pieces recovered from near the scene of the murder. These glass pieces examined by me were found to be identical in chemical composition and texture to the glass bangles recovered from her possession. The thin blue strands torn out from the sari and left on the barbed wire were also identified as belonging to the sari, having the same chemical composition and mechanical structure. The blood-stained dagger had four latent fingerprints on one side of the red

plastic handle and a latent palm print on the other. On chemical development they were found to be practically identical with the corresponding prints from the right hand of Kuldeep. She had several partially healed scratch wounds on



Figure 2. Micro-photograph of the fibres of a torn blue sari recovered from the accused, in polarised light × 450

her arms and legs which could have been caused by the barbed wire through which she rushed after committing the murder. The traces of brown stain on the torn shreds of her sari were found on chemical examination to be a mixture of iron rust from the barbs and blood from the raw wounds which they caused. The amount of blood on the shreds and barbs was not sufficient for a serological examination to determine the blood grouping, but that it was human blood was certain from the colour reactions it gave with benzidine and dihydrophenolphthalein.

From all these evidences and also from the case history narrated by Jeevan Lal and the statements of eye-witnesses: Jia Ram, the chowkidar of the school, and Munni Lal, a shopkeeper of Chandni Chowk, who was a bystander, Kuldeep was committed to sessions to stand trial for the murder of Sujata.

When the trial opened at the sessions court, it created a tremendous sensation on account of its unprecedented nature—a beautiful and educated woman committing the violent crime of murdering another woman in cold blood! What was most extraordinary was that such a shocking crime took place in an open thoroughfare in front of dozens of people, yet nobody could apprehend the murderess or even recognize her. The accused made only a very short statement saying that she was innocent and she had been implicated in this matter by the enmity of Jeevan Lal who was once her friend. The prosecution's eye-witnesses, Jai Ram and Munni Lal, were taken by the order of the court, to an identification parade where Kuldeep and six other girls of her height, colour, and build, and similarly dressed with blue saries and blouses, were made to stand in line, and the eye-witnesses separately asked to identify the accused. Munni Lal could not identify her even on the third attempt and Jia Ram falteringly identified her on the second. Munni Lal in his deposition before the court had said that he definitely heard the murdered girl uttering the gasping cry: "Oh Kuldeep! it is you!" before she sank down, and Jia Ram in his deposition said that he clearly saw the face of the murderess and actually wanted to catch her but due to his age he was no match for her in agility and nimbleness with which she scaled the barbed wire fence and disappeared into the darkness. The only other witness was Jeevan Lal who told his own story.

The sessions judge, on consideration of the circumstantial evidence produced by the prosecution and the technical evidence adduced by me, came to the definite conclusion that Kuldeep was guilty of premeditated murder of Sujata, and sentenced her

to imprisonment for life. On appeal to the High Court, however, she was acquitted on the ground that no one can be convicted of murder under Section 302 IPC solely on circumstantial evidence. For a proper conviction under this section, direct evidence of actual eye-witnesses is invariably required otherwise the prosecution will fail. The High Court found the evidence of the chowkidar unreliable, and it was dangerous to convict on his testimony alone. A person accused of murder must be definitely proved to have committed the crime, otherwise he or she is innocent.

Kuldeep is a free woman now, but where is she and what is she doing? Only a few days ago there was a news item in the papers that a beautiful young school-mistress named Kuldeep had committed suicide in her room by hanging from the ceiling fan with the end of her sari tied to her neck. Was this the same Kuldeep who figures so prominently in our present episode? Nobody could tell. Kuldeep is too common a name for the women of Punjab, and many of them are quite beautiful, at least when young. Are they not?

Young Murderess from Incompatible Marriage

In this modern age, particularly in urban society, a marriage between a teen-aged girl and an old man in his mid-fifties, is an unthinkable and unbelievable proposition. The educated and enlightened partners in a marriage these days are free to choose for themselves, or can at least express their opinions freely in a matter of such vital importance. But in some minority communities in this country, such as Muslims, women have still no voice in the selection of their partners in matrimony and they remain at the disposal of their parents or guardians in so far as giving them away in marriage is concerned. Marriage being only a matter of contract in such communities and not a religious institution, marriageable girls are given away by their parents solely on the consideration of convenience or benefit to themselves. In this way, sometimes teen-aged girls are given away in marriage to prospective grooms who are approaching their sixties. For obvious reasons, such marriages are inevitable failures, culminating in alianation, separation, desertion, or elopement. A few may end with far more disastrous results like suicide, homicide, or even murder. The last type of escape from an incompatible marriage, although quite rare in this country, does occasionally come to public notice. The case of Sarafatulla Khan is an example in point which I as a criminologist had the occasion to investigate very carefully and in great detail. He was a rich semi-illiterate landlord of a village in northern Uttar Pradesh. At 54 years of age and on the verge of dotage, he had

the indiscretion to marry for the second time, a sprightly college girl of 19, who could easily have been his granddaughter. How could such a grotesque combination of husband and wife last in an atmosphere of amity and goodwill that is expected of a nuptial union? In all respects the two partners were like poles apart. A young woman in a difficult situation will always find a sympathizer, a lover, or a paramour to extricate her from the situation and allow her to escape from the dreadful predicament, by means fair or foul. More often than not, the latter comes more handy, and murder may come in the wake of such vile attempts at escape when all other remedies have failed. The case of Sarafatulla given in the following pages is a grim illustration in point.

Sarafatulla Khan was a big talukdar of Aminabad in the Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh. He was a dark, tall, hefty fellow with square, thickset jaws, and a stolid countenance. He had a personality so full of determination, drive, and ego that it belied his age.

There is an old saying that there is nothing more dangerous than a young wife for an old man. Sarafatulla had been a widower for a long time and it was indeed a moment of indiscretion in his life that he married a young girl of 19 when he was 52 years of age.

Shakila, his wife was a vivacious college girl of considerable charm, and had just graduated from a well known women's college of Lucknow. To her, life had no other meaning than an eternal round of hectic excitement and a never-ending cavalcade of fun, film, and fantasy. In Sarafatulla, she found an uncompromising, irreconcilable stumbling block that was exasperating, as there was nothing in common between husband and wife. On the other hand, there was Salim, a handsome young medical student who was a great friend of hers and a distant relative, with whom she would never get tired of talking.

They talked, they thought, they conspired. One fine morning,

Sarafatulla was suddenly taken ill—a strange thing for him, even at that age. Severe diarrhoea and nausea confined him to bed for over a fortnight, and when the recovered, his old vigour and stamina had gone. He could not walk twenty steps without panting for breath. His hair which was raven black, now began rapidly to turn grey Old-age and infirmity began to engulf him with a vengeance.

As months went by, Sarafatulla grew weaker and weaker, and at the end of about six months was practically confined to bed. He had several relapses in the meantime and was almost reduced to a skeleton. All along, his wife was with him, but from time to time they were visited by their relative and friend Salim, who came from Lucknow for this purpose. But it became known to all the neighbours that Shakila was very frequently receiving letters from Lucknow, most probably from Salim. Their attachment, in fact almost infatuation for each other, had by now become a public scandal.

On 17 June 1943, a blood-red sun was just rising when Sarafatulla breathed his last. He had symptoms of cholera with severe vomitting and purging on the previous day and night, and his own family physician had been attending on him throughout. By about noon he was buried. It was indeed fortunate that Sarafatulla was a Mohammedan, for had he been a Hindu, he would have been cremated and all evidence would have been lost. His burial kept it alive.

About October 1943, suspicion arose about the naturalness of Sarafatulla's death although his attending family physician had certified it. His body was exhumed and the entrails sent to the government chemical examiner for examination and report. The latter, however, found nothing wrong and reported accordingly. The body was buried once again with due ceremony.

One month afterwards, that is, in November 1943, suspicion was again raised on unimpeachable evidence, as certain letters that Shakila had written to Salim were recovered from the

latter's possession. From them it became apparent that Shakila was getting very anxious to get rid of Sarafatulla expeditiously and was being disappointed at the slow progress of the old man towards his doom. She wanted Salim to send her some "strong medicine" which would hasten the process and relieve her once and for all from the agonizing tension. Sarafatulla's body was again disinterred and the entrails came to me for examination and report as Sarafatulla's relatives had lost confidence in the efficiency of the government chemical examiner in detecting an insidious poison, about the administration of which no doubt was now left. They felt certain that Sarafatulla met with his doom by poisoning at the hands of Shakila, by some kind of poison supplied to her by Salim, as the result of a vile conspiracy between them.

I made the examination very carefully, but there was no trace of any known organic or inorganic poison in them. I was almost going to send the same report as the government chemical examiner, when the one thing that amazed me was the most remarkable state of preservation of the innards. The stomach and the intestine looked normal, although they had been taken from a body that had been buried for six months. And the heat of summer and the deluge of the rainy season had gone over it. How could that be possible? I had a faint glimmer of light in that dark and dreary mystery. I wanted to see the dead body.

The body was in a perfect state of preservation. There was scarcely any stench about it. The colour of the skin had been bleached to a livid whiteness and was now looking like old ivory. The loss of body fluids at the time of death had shrivelled up the skin, which was now stuck to the massive skeleton almost like an Egyptian mummy. I felt certain that arsenic was there in that body and only arsenic could keep it in that condition. I began my examination once again for which I had to take all the paraphernalia to the spot.

By a very sensitive test, detecting one part of arsenic in four million, traces of arsenic were found in the liver, spleen and

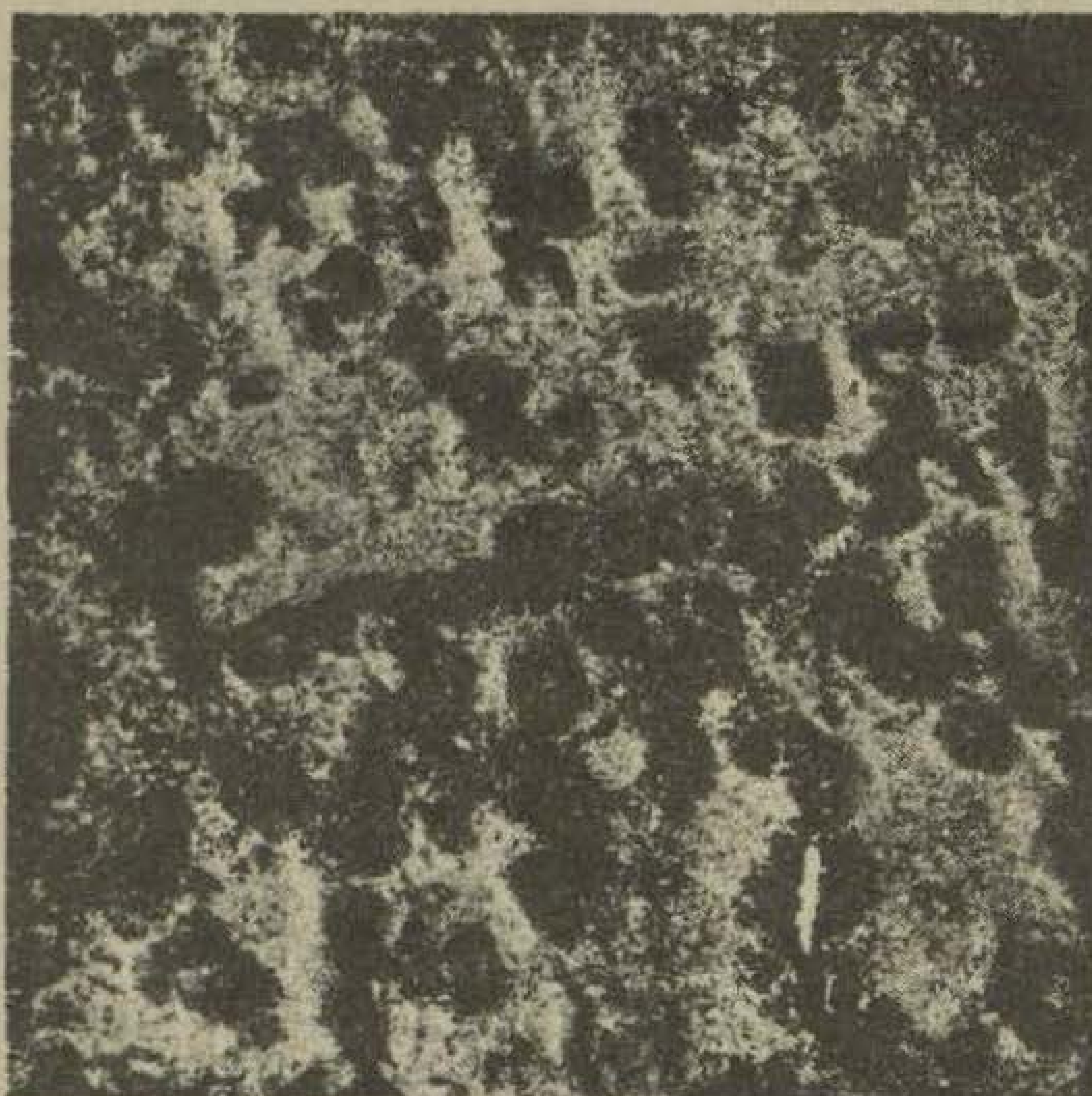


Figure 1. Micro-photograph of crystals of sodium arsenate (slow deadly killer) used in this murder, in ordinary light. ×450

the kidneys. Similar amounts were present in muscle fibres. More was found in the cartileges or soft bones of the ear, nose and sternum. Far greater quantities were found in the big bones like the humerus, the tibia, and the femur. But the greatest concentration of arsenic was in the nails, teeth, and hair. Purging and vomitting at the time of death had denuded the entrails of arsenic no doubt, but the presence of arsenic in the harder tissues of the body was sure evidence of the slow and continued ingestion of that insidious poison extending over months. Arsenic in the hair, nails, and teeth showed that it must have

been first administered to Sarafatulla at least six months before his death, otherwise it could not have infiltrated to such remote and hard tissues of the body. Arsenic to the human body is a one-way traffic.

On my evidence, both Shakila and her paramour were arrested and charged with the murder of Sarafatulla. They were comitted to sessions and were sentenced to transportation for life. Their appeals to the High Court were rejected. Shakila died within six months of the commencement of her sentence. The other fellow must be serving his term now. Never did I feel so sad as then.

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